

A STUDY OF THE TENSION BETWEEN DESPAIR AND HOPE IN ISAIAH 7
AND 8 FROM A PERSPECTIVE OF TRAUMA AND POSTTRAUMATIC
GROWTH

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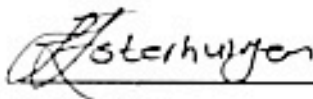
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Declaration

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GROWTH**

I declare that the above dissertation/thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



Signature

1 March 2017
Date

Dedication

To my parents in heaven, Johan and Sarie Horn, who loved me unconditionally, taught me to be unconditional in my beliefs, but most of all, showed me that our Heavenly Father IS unconditional Love.

Acknowledgements

My heart is filled with gratitude and like the Psalmist I can truly say 'my cup runneth over'. To my Heavenly Father, who saved me when I needed Him the most, I am thankful for my Redeemer lives. My husband Willem, a true child of God, who walked side-by-side with me through this amazing journey – I love you more than words can say. To my twin boys, Wihan and Chris, you give my life purpose and meaning and when I look at you, I see God's grace. A special word of acknowledgement and gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Willie Wessels for his encouragement, patience, hours of intense deliberation and sound academic advise. I will be forever grateful.

Soli Deo Gloria

Abstract

Isaiah 7 and 8 are set against the Syro-Ephraimite war and the looming threat of an Assyrian invasion. The historical and social circumstances are laced with tension of despair and hope in the pending crisis. These two chapters are also the starting point of Isaiah prophetic utterances directed at King Ahaz and the people of Judah. From the outset of chapter 7, notions of tension between Isaiah and King Ahaz can be detected. In chapter 8, these notions of tension become further more evident in the oracles of Isaiah. Chapter 7 and 8 also contains oracles that give prominence to the three children with the symbolic names of *Shear-jashub*, *Immanuel* and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*. The messages of the children's oracles are the same that is to trust Yahweh and not to despair in their faith. This study investigates the tension between despair and hope in Isaiah 7 and 8 from a perspective of trauma and posttraumatic growth.

To understand trauma within a theological discourse, more precisely, with regards to chapters 7 and 8, this study will provide an overview on trauma and trauma tendencies. This research endeavour also addresses biblical trauma and trauma in prophesy to gain an understanding how to read Isaiah 7 and 8 through a trauma lens. The expositional study of chapters 7 and 8 forms the foundation of the study to identify the notions of despair and hope within the text. A notable theme in Isaiah 7 and 8 is the tension triangle between Ahaz, Isaiah and Yahweh, and the research explores the significance thereof in the pending crisis. Isaiah 7 and 8 reports the metaphorical action behind the names of Isaiah's children and this study attempts to address the trauma and posttraumatic growth implications of these names. These names construe a prophetic message of despair and judgment but similarly also a message of hope and future expectations.

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Chapter 1

Overview of study

1.1 Introduction

'A rose is a rose is a rose', is the most widely cited line of the American writer Gertrude Stein, where she suggests that all roses are the same. However, when the focus is shifted from roses to people, and particularly, the prophetic roles of individuals, all people cannot naturally be grouped together by saying that 'a prophet is a prophet is a prophet'. The thorn in this analogy can surely be named the Book of Isaiah, where the prophet Isaiah is not just a prophet, but also a beacon of hope, even in circumstances of despair and judgment.

The interpretation and understanding of the prophetic text of Isaiah is endlessly challenging and problematic. As theological scholars, we do research to investigate old truths but also to discover new insights. That is being done by formulating new questions in the quest to understand the relevant literature, and most of all to interpret this literature within the world we are living in today.

The whole research process is laying the foundation to experience new insights and interpretation moments. This thesis study is an ideal opportunity and challenges me as a researcher and scholar to learn, search and understand the process in the critical formation of such a study. On a personal level, I believe that this study will not only be an immense academic adventure in which I can gain knowledge and personal gratification, but that it could create a world which does not always deal with ways beforehand in a literal sense when reading the text. This could create opportunities and research prospects laced with undiscovered uncertainties and theological possibilities to discover. Isaiah, and especially Isaiah chapters 7 and 8, caught my academic interest, research and personal interest and creates the opportunity for myself, as a scholar, to study these two chapters with the viewpoint to find new insight of understanding of this biblical text.

The last three decades of research on the book of Isaiah are characterised by an increasing diversity in scholarly approach. There is no end to commentaries on the book of Isaiah, which I used for research and references for this study.

Clemens (1985:98) describes the book of Isaiah as having 'one of the most complex literary structures of the entire old Testament.'

The history of scholars who grappled with Isaiah, according to Kim in Hauser (2008:119), includes the likes of Duhm (1914), Budde (1928), Fohrer (1962-1964, 1972), Westermann (1969), Kaiser (1972), Wildberger (1972), Melugin (1976), Vermeylen (1977-1978), Clements (1980), Sweeney (1988), Seitz (1993) and many more.

Later research done by Becker (1997), Blenkinsopp (2000), De Jong (2007), Tull (2010), Berges (2012), Prokhorov (2015) and Roberts (2015) wrestled with the notion of the book of Isaiah and with the concept of the *Denkschrift* too. Sweeney (2010:94) writes that advances made in the literary methodologies, shifted the focus to Isaiah as a prophetic personality within the book as a unit.

My initial research started with the so-called Isaiah-*Denkschrift* (Isaiah 6:1-9:6), coined by Budde (1928). It seems from studies done, that this specific unit proofed to ignite a great deal of scholarly debate. Recent studies like the work of De Jong (2007:14), postulates that the Isaiah memoirs played a decisive role in determining the image of a prophet and the text of first Isaiah. A recent study by Prokhorov (2015:25) suggests that even though many scholars over the last decade abandoned the so-called *Denkschrift*, many scholars today have not lost interest in it, as a new wave of studies focuses on the function of this unit as a vital compositional core for chapters 1-12.

In my quest to understand the *Denkschrift*, chapters 7 and 8 presented me with a research opportunity that immediately sparked my interest. A common thread that was noticed within chapters 7 and 8 was the tension throughout between despair and hope. In the Isaiah prophecy, the equilibrium swayed constantly between prophecies of judgment and salvation. What also became very clear was that aspects of trauma were visible within the verses of these chapters. Imagery, symbols and specific metaphors underline the trauma that was experienced by Isaiah, the King Ahaz and the people of Judah. Trauma is part of life, today and since the beginning of time. The aim of this study is to address the issue of hope and despair in Isaiah 7 and 8 and, particularly, the role that trauma played in this regard.

1.2 The actuality and relevance of the proposed study

Trauma is an extensive field of research that encompasses a variety of study fields such as psychiatry, psychology and sociology. Trauma as a theory is a relative new concept that only grew in interest after psychology and psychiatric scholars started to study the impact that exposure to violence, war, terror and serious injury had on individuals and groups. The question can then rightfully be asked what the relevance of this study would be? As a scholar in psychology and in theology, I believe that this study, which departs from modern theory on trauma and traumatisation, can provide valuable insight in understanding the undisclosed trauma underlying the text of Isaiah 7 and 8. By studying the biblical text of Isaiah 7 and 8 against the historical and social context reflected by this text, it can contribute to the detections and understanding of elements of trauma in this text corpus.

The study of Isaiah 7 and 8, presented as pre-exilic text,¹ provides an opportunity to assess the text as pre-traumatic and traumatic experiences, because of the eminent and constant threat of war from the Syro-Ephraimite coalition, the prospect of the Assyrian campaign and becoming a vassal for

¹ The notion of a pre-exilic text will be discussed in detail in ensuing chapters of this study.

this nation in an impending war, looming Divine punishment, threats of disaster and the possibility of exile and suffering as a conscience of not only of disobedience, but as a result of the threat of war.

The text also offers glimmers of hope and restitution for the people of Judah within the chapters of Isaiah 7 and 8. These glimmers of hope provide the prospect for this study to assess the concept of traumatic growth within a trauma-based theory.² Following the lead of trauma studies, we find that the impact of trauma can be direct or indirect, experienced by an individual or by a collective group. Through the echoes in biblical literature, these traumatic experiences do not just occur in what is not said, but also in what is said. The study of the pre-exilic prophetic text of Isaiah 7 and 8 will attempt to catalyse the onset, shaping and extension of the traumatic events that affects the prophet Isaiah, the King and the people of Judah within this chosen text section.

Scholars such as Smith-Christopher, Morrow and Carr in Kelle, Ames, and Wright (2011), write that individuals and communities who have been traumatised, struggle with feelings of shame and guilt. These feelings are some of the most common features when trauma is experienced. This study will therefore aim to make a distinction between shame and guilt, as it is fundamentally important in Isaiah 7 and 8, where the blame falls on the individual and the community. Shame and guilt can also be referred to as despair and feelings of hopelessness.

The prophetic tradition of Isaiah in these chapters can offer a concrete diagnosis of where Judah went wrong. This study will also investigate the metaphorical name giving of Isaiah's sons in chapter 7 and 8 as symbols of traumatic occurrences, threats and features of hope.³ If themes of guilt, shame and despair are universal among those who experience trauma, there is another prominent theme that this study will aim to address: the restoration

² Traumatic growth as a concept of survival will be discussed in detail.

³ Themes of trauma will be explored in the significance of the name giving of Isaiah's sons.

of trust and hope within these chapters to elucidate the possibility of traumatic growth within an environment of despair.

The prophetic literature in Isaiah 7 and 8 will be studied to concur with this restoration of hope, as Isaiah's prophecies may hold the key to help the people of Judah repair their trust in Yahweh, and in a way in their communal identity.

The reading of social science literature together with the biblical text of Isaiah 7 and 8, as well as adding the perspectives gained from commentaries and other applicable literature will widen the picture of trauma and traumatic experiences in the past and the present. This whole endeavor will greatly enhance the relevance of this research project for the Old Testament science particularly, but also to society in general.

1.3 Problem statement

It is necessary at this point of the overview, to formulate a problem statement that would define the central aim of this study.

The problem statement of this study will be formulated as a statement based on research and read as follows:

There seems to be tension between notions of despair and hope in various passages in Isaiah 7 and 8. Within this context of tension, the supposition subsists that traumatic elements can be detected that relate to the issue of despair and hope in these two chapters.

Further questions that will arise will be:

Can a trauma perspective contribute to an understanding of the tension between the notion of despair and hope in Isaiah 7 and 8?

Can chapters 7 and 8 be read through a trauma lens, and if so, what is the meaning of trauma within a theological discourse?

How does the metaphorical name giving of Isaiah's sons play in the On the despair-hope tension and aspects of trauma?

The statement and synthesis of this study aim to determine what the evidence of commentaries, literature, textual and secondary data, convey about trauma and traumatised within the text of Isaiah 7 and 8.

The aims and objectives of this study can be summarised as follows:

- Highlighting aspects of despair and hope in Isaiah 7 and 8 and show the tension between them.
- Studying trauma, traumatised and trauma theories within a social science context and to be able to define the term trauma as defined in literature.
- Reading of Isaiah 7 and 8 from a perspective of trauma to be able to identify trauma elements within the given text.
- Identifying specific markers of trauma as presented in social science literature and applying them to Isaiah 7 and 8.
- Looking at the metaphorical significance of name giving within the context of despair and hope from a trauma perspective.

The problem statement and subsequent objectives will serve as subject matters for various chapters of the thesis. The aim will be to address these raised issues in the study and chapters to follow.

1.4 Methodology

The methodology of this study will comprise of a literature study grounded on the analyses of relevant literature regarding the subject matter. A *literature* methodology, according to Lin (2009:179), is the following:

To read through, analyze and sort literatures in order to identify the essential attribute of materials. Literature materials are the crystallization of wisdom, are the ocean of knowledge, have important values for the development of human society.

Underlining the definition given by Lin (2009:179), Comerasamy (2013:15) writes that literature methodology is a choice of research method where published research and findings, is reviewed. Mouton (2004:179) concurs that the selection of sources is usually driven by theoretical considerations, which includes the aim of the study, the research questions and the sources to be studied.

To make this study successful and to add value on an academic level, literature methodology firstly must have purpose, and Lin (2009:180) elaborates that literature materials must be pertinent, valuable for the subject under research and theoretical based. Secondly it must have authority. Here it is pertinent that the author of the literature has a reputation in the research field.

On this notion, Comerasamy (2013:2) also states that a literature methodology analyses and synthesizes literature from both 'empirical and non-empirical sources'. What this implies is that it focuses on both deductive and inductive processes of literature studies.

Thirdly, according to Lin (2009:180), it must have effectiveness and he explains:

Research materials must be valuable to the research subject.

The values are reflected through being good for abstracting,
being beneficial for obtaining arguments and being conducive
to the formation of research thoughts.

Fourthly, literature methodology must have reliability. Lin (2009:180) further explains that reliability includes authenticity of the literature and the reliability of the contents.

To summarise literature methodology, consulted literature must be accurate, comprehensive, profound and typical to ensure that an academic conclusion can be achieved.

The four-abovementioned principles of literature methodology will form the point of departure in the selection of relevant literature for the research done on the text of Isaiah 7 and 8. Literature materials such as biblical commentaries, journals and academic books will form the basis of an in-depth study of Isaiah 7 and 8. The search, dialogue with and application of relevant literature will be an ongoing process throughout the research effort.

The object of study is the text of Isaiah 7 and 8. This text will first be analysed in terms of sense units to get a grasp of how the text is logically structured. A second step would be to determine on grounds of the analysis of the content what the nature of these units are. In the process of doing these first two steps the use of relevant literature will be essential. A third step would be to read the content against the historical and social background presented by the book of Isaiah and the relevant chapters 7 and 8. The threatening Syro-Ephraimitic war and the looming Assyrian invasion will form the historical background of the study. The social content of chapters 7 and 8 will also be analysed against the social setting, the political structures, the prophetic

utterance, the relationship between Isaiah and King Ahaz, and the constant threat of war.

The next step in the methodology would be to determine from research done on trauma literature what the characteristics of trauma are. Relevant psychological and social science literature will aid this study to better understand the concept of trauma and traumatisation. The gained knowledge would serve as a perspective from which to approach the chosen Isaiah texts.

The merging of theology as a study field and trauma as a theory provides an intersection of various academic subjects to be researched through literature methodology. Becker (2014:25) states that through literature studies, 'we can analyse more in detail how far trauma phenomenology can be used in our understanding of individuals as well as the collective experience of disaster, catastrophe and trauma.' Trauma studies opens and develops a platform for interdisciplinary research, because the ancient text as founded in biblical writings, can provide the answers how to cope and deal with trauma and tension.

Literature methodology will furthermore provide reliability in the quest to understand trauma and traumatisation as a historical phenomenon and not only as a modern-day invention.

1.5 Demarcation of the text to be studied

The first 12 chapters of Isaiah display a fundamental outline in which the so-called '*memoirs*' takes a central place. The book of Isaiah begins with a heading that defines the nature of Isaiah's message as a 'vision' concerning Judah and Jerusalem, received during the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Berges (2012:38) assumes that there is a double 'inclusion' within these chapters with the inclusion of two main themes, namely the 'Woes' and 'Yahweh's outstretched hand'. Both inclusions

underline the aspects of hope and despair on which this study will do research on.

The first 12 chapters of the book Isaiah is seen by scholars, such as Childs (2001), Hays (2010), De Sousa (2010), Berges (2012), Erikson (2014), as a complex unity with several complicated portions within the book of Isaiah. The reason why many scholars see Isaiah 1-12, as a unit is that Isaiah 1-12 deals with the situation in Judah, focusing on judgment but it also contains several passages about future hope. Brueggemann (1998:8) concurs on the unity of chapters 1-12 writing that there is no doubt of the 'historicity' of the events and it is evident that Isaiah occupied a 'theological memory, hope and imagination' of Israel. Hays (2010:110) explains that the larger unit of Isaiah 1-12, opens and closes with references to Yahweh as the 'Holy One of Israel' in Isaiah 1:4 and 12:6.

The chapters of this study, chapters 7 and 8, falls within the demarcation of chapters 1-12. It is deemed necessary to summarise chapters 1-12 to give an overview and to highlight the so-called *Denkschrift*, but also to clarify the position and choice of chapters 7 and 8 for this study.

In short, chapters 1-12 can be categorised as follows through the study of the relevant commentaries and literary works of Wildberger (1991), Kaiser (1972), Sweeney (1996), Tull (2010), Childs (2001) and Berges (2012):

Chapter 1:1 – The prophet's name as the name Isaiah, clarifies the vision where he imagined Jerusalem's future. Isaiah's name means 'Yahweh saves'.

Chapter 1:2-9 – Echoes the words of Yahweh's judgment. In verse 9, the prophet introduces what will be a significant theme for this study: the remnant. "If the Lord of hosts had not left us a small remnant, we would have become as Sodom, would have resembled Gomorrah."

Chapter 1:10-20 – Speaks of Israel's worship and that Yahweh is rejecting Israel's religious festivals and sacrifices because Israel has not maintained a just society.

Chapter 1:29-31 – Rebukes the worship of idols and Isaiah objects, and warns about worship of any other god than Yahweh.

Chapter 2:1-4 – Gives an insight into Jerusalem of the future. This will come after the city is purged by the coming judgment. The change will only come when the society becomes just again.

Chapter 2:5-22 – The refrain 'the Lord alone will be exalted on that day' (2:11-17) sets the tone for the poem of what is lying ahead for Jerusalem.

Chapter 3:1-12 – Foretells the collapse of the political order. One of the consequences will be the breakdown of society's basic structures. Judah will be without competent leaders. Feelings of despair and hopelessness will ensue.

Chapter 3:13-4:1 –The judgment upon the wealthy. Isaiah sees the fall of Judah and Jerusalem because of the decisions made by the people and he therefore picture them on trial before Yahweh. Here the rich are stealing from the poor and through judgment they will lose everything.

Chapter 4:2-6 – Even though Isaiah warns the people of the judgment and despair, he still gives hope when he envisions a new city.

Chapter 5:1-7 – The song of the vineyard. This passage is veiled in an allegory about his 'friend's' vineyard. The antithesis is that it is a song of disappointment. The relevance in this symbolism is that the people of Judah have not met Yahweh's expectations.

Chapter 5:8-23 – Judah's crimes. Now the prophet becomes specific. He begins by condemning the wealthy for taking most of the land, for exporting the crops and leaving the poor hungry.

Chapter 5:24-30 – The divine judgment of Judah is coming and the nation will be judged because they have a foundation of injustice.

1.5.1 Chapters 6:1-9:6 – The so-called Isaiah *Denkschrift*

Scholars like Clements (1980), Watts (1985), Wegner (1992), Sweeney (1996), Blenkinsopp (2000), Childs (2001), De Jong (2007) and Prokhorov (2015) have debated about the so-called *Denkschrift* or *memoirs* of Isaiah over the centuries. They tried to understand and place these verses within the surrounding chapters as well as the book. It is, however, not the aim of this study to add voice to this debate, but just to give a summary to understand the placement of these verses within chapters 1-12 and to highlight chapter 7 and 8 as research focus of this study.

Chapter 6:1-13 – The call of the prophet. The setting of the calling is in the Temple. There the prophet sees Yahweh, accompanied by seraphim, which means 'the burning one' and is a symbol for what is going to happen to the Israelites.

Chapters 7 and 8 – Judgments announced to Ahaz and Isaiah's testimonies. These two chapters will form the aim of this research and study. Interest in these two chapters came about as there is very little written about the metaphorical meaning of Isaiah's sons name and the underlying traumatic implications of these names to the people of Judah, Ahaz and the prophet. The significance and metaphorical meaning of Isaiah's sons will be investigated as symbols of despair and hope within the trauma concept of the chapters. In addressing these themes, the study will focus on the following texts:

- Isaiah 7:3ff: ‘Then the Lord said to Isaiah, “Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub”’
- Isaiah 7:14: Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.’
- Isaiah 8:1: ‘The Lord said to me, “Take a large scroll and write on it with an ordinary pen: Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz”’

The selection of these texts in chapters 7 and 8 will form the foundation for the study, but reference will be made to the content of both chapters to be able to address the themes and problem statement.

This chapter is set during the reign of Uzziah’s grandson Ahaz. These chapters relate to an encounter between Isaiah and Ahaz while the royal family and Jerusalem are threatened by war.

The last chapters of the first 12 can be summed up as follows:

Chapter 8:23-9:6 – From darkness to light. When Isaiah envisions the future, he sees an ideal future where the two Israelite kingdoms will be under a ruler from the Davidic dynasty.

Chapter 9:7-10:4 – Judgment on Israel. Isaiah moves back from his vision of the future to the present-day indictment. He denounces their arrogance; he singles out their elders and prophets and he describes a society that is destroying itself through strife and stealing from the poor.

Chapter 10:5-34 – Assyria. Yahweh’s instrument of judgment. Isaiah identifies Assyria as Yahweh’s instrument of judgment.

Chapter 11:1-9 – The shoot from Jesse. Yahweh’s promise regarding Judah’s future will find fulfillment through a descendent of Jess, the father of David.

Chapter 11:10-16 – Israel and Judah united. Here Isaiah speaks of the rule of the ideal king over a united kingdom. Isaiah compares this future situation to the exodus from Egypt.

Chapter 12:1-6 – A hymn of salvation. It is a short hymn of thanksgiving for Jerusalem's deliverance from despair and the salvation and hope that is to follow.

Isaiah chapters 1-12 form the first unit within the book of Isaiah.

1.6 Clarifying thematic words of the study

To understand a theme and concept within a certain context, definition and clarity is necessary to define and explain keywords to aid understanding within a specific framework. Hence, it is necessary for this study to clarify themes and keywords that will be used in this study. These themes and keywords will be used throughout this study and it will be incorporated within the various chapters.

1.6.1 Trauma

Why does trauma have such a great impact on human life? It is because trauma is part of humanity since the beginning of time. Even the terminology derives from ancient times with its origins in the Greek word 'wound' (O'Conner 2011:12 and Becker et al. 2014:16). Even ancient pagan literature such as Herodotus denotes psychical wounds and suffering. More so, is the biblical text also referring to trauma as wounds and suffering. The biblical text, however, also makes use of the metaphorical use of the word 'wound', rendering it an emotional wounding.⁴ Hence, we cannot claim that trauma is a modern phenomenon; modern-day science made it possible to understand ancient history in a modern method.

⁴ This concept of emotional wounding or trauma will be examined in the ensuing chapters.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DMS-IV-TR)* classifies trauma as individuals that have been exposed to trauma if they have experienced events involving threatened death or serious physical and mental injury, and then responded with intense fear, helplessness or horror. Other symptoms such as avoidance, feelings of numbness, detachment, startle response and outburst of anger may be evident.

Brewin (2003:288) suggest a more 'workable' definition for trauma and defines it as follows:

Victims of war, oppression, child abuse, marital violence, robbery, natural disaster or disaster of human origin, life-threatening accidents, and other overwhelming events have in common a mental and psychic response that is caused by the traumatic incident.

Individuals and groups will react to trauma in various ways and therefore it is of the utmost importance to see trauma in both an individual and cultural context. This study will strive to dovetail both these aspects through the text of Isaiah 7 and 8.

1.6.2 Traumatic tension

Traumatic tension or psychological distress, according to Briere and Scott (2015:1), will range from mild lingering anxiety symptoms that would interfere with almost all aspects of functioning. There are several risk factors that enhance traumatic tension in individuals as well as societies. Some of these risk factors are: socio-economic status, coping styles, and previous history of trauma exposure, environmental stress and peritraumatic dissociation (Briere & Scott 2015:27).

Posttraumatic stress as a tension risk factor refers to distress during or after trauma and is a major predictor of posttraumatic stress. It is noteworthy to see that Briere and Scott (2015:28-29) denote responses such as anger, shame and guilt as intolerant factors for trauma.

Taking these tension factors into consideration, this study will aim to address the relevance thereof by taking the relationship roles between Yahweh, Isaiah and the King into consideration.

1.6.3 Collective trauma

Collective trauma is trauma that is experienced by a group or community. Erikson (1994:5) defines collective trauma as 'a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of community.' The impact of collective trauma creates emotional and psychological wounds that impact the identity of the collective group. Shamai (2016:17) writes that collective trauma goes beyond loss and damage, but it extends to the entire collective of a group or a unit.

1.6.4 Posttraumatic growth

Posttraumatic growth is the view that individuals and communities can be changed, sometimes in radically good ways, by their struggle with trauma, according to Calhoun and Tedeschi (2006:3), and they further write that 'the problem of human suffering is central to much of both ancient and contemporary religious thinking.' The concept of posttraumatic growth is not new. Literature for a few thousand years grappled with the possibilities for meaning and change that could emerge out of struggle, tragedy, suffering and loss. The idea that individuals as well as communities who struggle with trauma can experience significant growth is therefore not something new.

Trauma is synonymous with negative emotional experiences and for most individuals and communities it can produce negative consequences. But, for many individuals and communities, a very negative traumatic event can also produce a positive change. Calhoun and Tedeschi (2006:5) define five growth domains, namely personal strength, new possibilities, relating to others, appreciation of life and spiritual change.⁵

Growth in a theological sense, represent hope and faith. In Isaiah 7 and 8 a vast amount of despair and suffering is presented. These trauma elements are part of Isaiah's prophecy, but the prophecy continuum also presents hope and the promise of survival to the people of Judah if they place their faith in Yahweh.

1.6.5 Metaphors

A metaphor is one of the most powerful tools of persuasion. Jindo (2010:xiii) defines a metaphor as a 'mode of expression, whereby one thing (A) is understood and described in terms of another (B). The concept of a metaphor within a biblical understanding regarding Isaiah 7 and 8 will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter. The relevance between the metaphorical name giving of Isaiah's sons, and markers of trauma as tools of persuasion as either despair and suffering or as glimmers of hope will be discussed.

The metaphors used in the name giving of Isaiah's sons, are used as a measure of communication to engage with a specific person, or audience to support the message and prophecy that are being conveyed. MacCormac (1976:34) rightly states that 'a metaphor can be characterized by tension or surprise.' If a metaphor can create tension, a basic traumatic risk factor, the role, function and interpretation thereof, is eminent for this study.

⁵ These five domains will be addressed in this study of Isaiah 7 and 8.

1.6.6 Trauma-specific metaphor

Wilson and Lindy (2013:6) defines a trauma-specific metaphor as ‘a spontaneous verbal picture of the traumatic event and it serves as a organizer to rearrange the nature and the meaning of the experience.’

1.7 Chapters anticipated

With regards to the structure of the study, the proceeding chapters will be as follows:

In *Chapter 2* the main focus will be the understanding of trauma by highlighting the theories, definition and social science’s understanding of the concept.

The main aim in *Chapter 3* is the synergy between trauma and prophecy, creating a theological perspective to read Isaiah 7 and 8 through a trauma lens.

Chapter 4 will study the historical climate of Isaiah 7 and 8 within the so-called *Isaiah-Denkschrift* (6:1-9:6). The chapter will focus on two aspects with the first pertaining the historical scene as presented in the pericope. The second part will investigate the social background with reverence to the traumatic events and traumatic climate created by the tension of the imminent Assyrian threat.

In *Chapter 5* a thorough literature and expositional study will be done on Isaiah 7 and 8. Relevant commentaries, literature and academic materials will be examined, discussed and implemented to attain an analytical analysis of these two chapters.

As a further emanation, *Chapter 6* will investigate the traumatic triangle and tension between Yahweh, King Ahaz and the prophet with specific mention of the sway between despair and hope within the prophetic utterance of Isaiah.

Building on the previous chapters, *Chapter 7* will focus on the metaphorical meaning and trauma implication of the name giving of Isaiah's two sons, namely *Shear-jashub* and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*. The challenge of this chapter is to draw a constructive conclusion between the metaphorical implication and the trauma markers contained in the names as aspects of traumatisation. The trauma elements found within the text will be compared to the modern-day classification and assessment of trauma.

A summary and conclusion will form the content of the last chapter. It will conclude with an overview of the central findings of the study, its contributions, limitations and a critical reflection on the role of the study.

Chapter 2

Understanding trauma

*Oh that my grief was thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances
together!*
Job 6:2

2.1 Introduction

Bad things happen and when bad things happen, people suffer. The phenomenon of trauma is therefore not new and it is as old as humankind itself. The origin of trauma and the psychological and emotional reverberation can be traced back to Adam and Eva when they were banished from Paradise. Throughout history a literary and artistic record of the impact of trauma and suffering can be found in the works of poets, artists and novelists such as Shakespeare, Dickens and Munch. Even though trauma and traumatic experiences are part of being human, the study of trauma within the social and psychological contexts are relatively new, spanning a little over a century.

While it might seem that the notion of trauma is commonplace today, the use of trauma as a theory in psychology is a fairly new field of study. Therefore, the use of trauma as a theory in the field of biblical studies is even more so in its infancy, rendering new scope and possibilities for research. A most exciting prospect indeed as new groundwork can be done.

To understand trauma within a theological framework, more precisely, within prophecy regarding Isaiah chapters 7 and 8, it is necessary as a biblical scholar to understand what trauma means and where it derives from within a psychological reference in order to have an interdisciplinary study about it. Therefore, within the context of the present study, this chapter seeks to answer several questions: What are the main ways of understanding trauma and within literature? If trauma can be understood, what types of trauma are

there and what is the extent of traumatising? What is the meaning of these concepts within a theological discourse? Is it possible that trauma is not only seen as despair but as hope as well? Could resilience be part of posttraumatic growth?

In addressing these questions, the aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of relevant studies and contributions in the field of trauma and to study the use of trauma theory within a theological context. The aim of this chapter is also to understand trauma, discuss the various trauma theories and the events that contributed to the study of trauma. The discussion in this chapter will deal with studies reflected in literature.

2.2 The history of trauma studies

Studies and theories about the origins of trauma have existed for millennia. It should be stated from the outset that literature on psychological trauma is vast and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide an exhaustive account of the historical development of trauma. Ample studies and reviews on trauma and understanding trauma have been already presented in various clinical studies and books (Bracken 2002; Herman 2001; Wilson 1994).⁶

The formal study of trauma has a history of only 150 years. It was, however, not until the late 19th century that formal theoretical models began to transpire (Lamprecht & Sack 2002). During this time, research was done on the link between violent or life-threatening events and the impact on the lives of the individual. Ringel and Brandell (2012:2) concur: 'During the late 19th century, a major focus was characterized by sudden paralysis, amnesia, sensory loss and convulsions.' Also during the late 19th century, a major focus was the study of hysteria, a disorder commonly diagnosed in women. The work of Charcot, Freud and Breuer focused on the relationship between trauma and mental illness associated with this hysteria. Wastell (2005:1) writes that the

⁶ This study is using the 4th edition of Herman's book *Trauma and recovery*, published in 2001 with a new afterword. The first edition was published in 1981.

reason for the interest in trauma and the subsequent study thereof was because there were changes in social structure, medical advances and a new philosophical outlook. Philosophical ideas have greatly influenced the different approaches and studies of understanding human beings, the world they live in and events that continuously shaped and redefined traumatic concepts.

Throughout the different periods of time and ages, the understanding of trauma concepts has never been straightforward but was always clad with heated debates, especially concerning an understanding of trauma, finding common ground about a definition and categorising traumatic events, the presence or absence of certain symptoms and the possibility of recovery.

In history, two factors of development played a significant role in the study of trauma and the way survivors of trauma have been viewed and treated. Scholars such as Wastell, Friedman, Keane and Resick concur that the Industrial Revolution in Europe and North America, as well as the political situation in France from the middle of the 19th century, marked the interest for the study of trauma and the impact of traumatic events. The building of railways meant that people could travel at new unprecedented speed. According to Weisaeth in Friedman, Keane and Resick (2014:40), this led to horrific accidents and in psychological terms this trauma was referred to as 'railway spine'. This term described the emotional shock and the physical injuries that the passengers endured. Wastell (2005:3) writes: 'The rise of interest in this condition was the beginning of the funded study of trauma.' Further studies on trauma have followed along a period of a chronological line of nervous shock, traumatic neurosis, anxiety neurosis (Freud 1894, 1919), fright neurosis (Kræplin 1886) and shell shock (Mott 1919).

The 19th century set the scene for further reform, change and turbulence, even more so the political climate in France. Wastell (2005:3) writes that 'one aspect of the political situation was that the secular governments of the time were staunchly anti-clerical.' The aim of the revolution was to take power away from the Catholic Church, which had a great influence in France and over the French women. Herman (2001:7-9) postulates that trauma studies

saw a meaningful development because of the political movement that took place throughout history.

She writes that the concept of hysteria emerged from the 'anticlerical political movement' at the end of the 19th century in France.

Two famous French traumatologists, namely Chardot and Janet, can be seen as pioneers in the study of trauma within the historical framework. It was Chardot that was requested by insurance companies to study the 'railway spine' phenomenon to eliminate fraudulent claims. It is of interest to note that while the phenomenon of 'railway spine' was studied, some scholars found the symptoms to be like that of 'hysteria'. At that time 'hysteria' was a disorder, which was believed a condition only to be associated with women. These hysterical symptoms were characterised by sudden paralysis, amnesia and sensory loss, according to Ringel and Brandell (2012:1). Chardot's study of trauma was significant in the sense that he asserted that the symptoms of hysteria were the result of the women's actual traumatic experiences.

Pierre Janet, a student of Chardot, continued the study of trauma during 1890-1910. Janet researched the influence of patients' traumatic experiences on personality development and behaviour. Wastell (2005:5) states that it was the work of Janet who noted the 'vehement emotions' in the experience of trauma and by 'vehement emotions' he meant terror and fear. Van der Kolk (1994:253) agrees with Wastell's assumption of Janet's work when he writes: 'They became fixated on the past, in some cases by being obsessed with the trauma, but more often by behaving and feeling as if they were traumatized over and over again without being able to locate the origins of these feelings.' It is evident when one studies the work of Janet, that the idea of trauma is not one-dimensional, but that there are a multitude of emotions and experiences that needs to be considered to understand the impact of trauma. Janet, like his predecessor Chardot, was of the opinion that hysteria was a result of real trauma within human experiences.

In the early 1880s Sigmund Freud conceptualised the concept of psychic trauma. Therefore, no historical analysis of trauma could be undertaken without studying the valuable work done by Freud. In a way, he paved the way for understanding trauma as it is seen today. Freud studied under Charcot and he referred to Charcot as the 'greatest of physicians'. Freud, just as Charcot, considered hysteria symptoms as a result of traumatic experiences that could be found in both men and women. For the time, this notion was frowned upon and difficult to accept. Weisaeth in Friedman et al. (2014:43),⁷ further explains that Freud stated that hysterical symptoms 'could only be understood if they were traced to earlier experiences that had a traumatic effect on the individual.' This idea of a 'deferred action' meant that the effect of a traumatic occurrence would be discernible later in the person's life when it was relived as a memory.

Herman (2001:7-9), however, argues that substantial developments of trauma concepts are closely correlated to political activities throughout history. She cites the example of hysteria that emerged out of the anticlerical political movement in France at the end of the 19th century. However, Freud later considered trauma as a form of neurosis after analysing other types of traumatic events, such as traumas of war. Rambo (2010:3) elaborates on Freud's reconsideration of trauma that also started a research shift in the 20th century: 'Studies of soldiers and the aftereffects of combat have dominated trauma studies.' The first theory used to explain war trauma, was the term *the shell shock* used by Mott in 1919 in the context of World War I. The term was coined because of the symptoms that soldiers displayed, such as trembling, loss of speech, nightmares, depression, amnesia and insomnia. The latter part of the 20th century, from 1939, has been beleaguered with wars and disasters. This includes World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, several wars in the Middle East and copious other wars in Africa that seems to be forgotten about. Wastell (2005:16) concluded after numerous case studies that war survivors 'showed hyper-alert anxiety, experienced

⁷ Although this study is using the 2nd edition of Friedman, Keane and Resick's book *Handbook of PTSD Science and Practice*, published in 2015 with a new afterword and amendments on the DSM-5, it should be mentioned that the book was first published in 2010.

progressive blocking of emotions, exhibited behavioural inhibitions and suffered de-differentiation of emotions.'

On the war spectrum, Herman (2001:9) postulates that posttraumatic experiences developed within the context of the Vietnam War and the anti-war movement in America.

Posttraumatic stress disorder as a diagnostic tool was first used in connection with war trauma in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. This specific term, referring to a specific condition, was formally adapted in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association as a psychiatric disorder (APA 1980). Through the years the classification model DSM-1 to DSM-5 defined trauma as an exposure to a traumatic event and considering the symptoms in the aftermath of such a traumatic event. For O'Connor (2011: 2) trauma studies arose from 'the bloody smear that was the twentieth century.' She cites an example list of modern disasters that had a long-lasting effect on the victims, such as both the World Wars, Holocaust, Vietnam, Armenian genocide, atomic bombs on Hiroshima and bloodbaths in the Congo, to list a few. Posttraumatic stress according to Rambo (2016:3), is suffering that remains because there is one common denominator and that is that the traumatic experience 'overwhelm' the human process of adapting to the traumatic event.

Individual trauma was the starting point of trauma studies. Events in history such as war, terrorism and epidemics only later gain interest and study prospects as mass or collective trauma. Wainrib (2006:5) makes the observation that research on mass trauma 'has indicated that there have been instances of it worldwide since biblical times and perhaps even before.'

Rambo (2010:4) explains that the changing shape of trauma studies was because of expanding research of the brain, the diagnosis of the traumatic disorder, as well as the increasing knowledge about the impact of violence. It is of interest to note that the shift of interpretation includes not only the individual, but also includes the 'cycles of history' and the 'global and political effect' of violence. Rambo (2010:4) states that the study of trauma 'has

expanded to account for multiple levels of trauma: historical trauma, institutional trauma and global trauma.'

Through the centuries, people's lives were impacted by trauma and their response to traumatic events change the way in which trauma was seen. A trauma paradigm shift occurred.

2.3 Trauma defined

To understand what trauma does, we must understand what it is. Terr (1990:8),⁸ who did the first longitudinal study on trauma, writes: 'Trauma occurs when a sudden, unexpected, overwhelming intense emotional blow or series of blows assaults the person from outside. Traumatic events are external, but it quickly becomes incorporated into the mind.' Van der Kolk (1989:393) makes a comparable assumption about the intricate nature of trauma when he says the following: 'Traumatisation occurs when both internal and external resources are inadequate to cope with the external threat.' Both Terr and Van der Kolk, through the definitions they construed, believe it is how the individual's mind and body reacts in its own unique way to the traumatic experience that defines trauma. I am, however, also of the opinion that within the trauma spectre, the individual's social group plays a role, and that a traumatic experience is a combination of the individual's response within a specific social setting.

We all use the word trauma in everyday language to mean a highly stressful event. O'Connor (2011:2) writes that the word trauma originates from the Greek word *wound*. The word alone recalls the effects of major events such as war, rape, kidnapping, abuse, survival, natural disaster, pain and suffering.

According to the text revision of the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DMS-V-TR)*, individuals have been exposed to trauma if they have experienced events involved or threatened

⁸ The book by Terr, L. *How trauma affects children and ultimately us all* was first published in 1936, but for the purpose of this study, the 1990 edition will be used.

death or serious physical and mental injury, and responded with intense fear, helplessness, or horror. There are also constrictive symptoms such as avoidance of stimulate associated with the trauma, as well as a general feeling of numbness. This may include efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, activities, places and people associated with the trauma. Often feelings of detachment and a sense of a foreshortened future occur.

Emotional and psychological symptoms of trauma are the following:

- Shock, denial or disbelief
- Anger, irritability, mood swings
- Guilt, shame, self-blame
- Feeling sad or hopeless
- Confusion, difficulty
- Anxiety and fear
- Withdrawing from others
- Feeling disconnected or numbness

Physical symptoms of trauma are the following:

- Insomnia or nightmares
- Being startled easily
- Racing heartbeat
- Aches and pains
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Edginess and agitation

Symptoms of re-experienced trauma are the following:

- Intrusive thoughts
- Nightmares
- Emotional numbing
- Avoidance of situations
- Guilt feelings
- Anger
- Inability to make healthy choices

Finally, symptoms of heightened response include an exaggerated startle response, difficulty sleeping and outbursts of anger. Janzen (2012:27) writes that intrusive and most of the constrictive symptoms are all beyond the conscious control of the trauma victim.

Allen (1995:14) states that there are two components to a traumatic experience: the objective and the subjective. According to him, 'it is the subjective experience of the objective events that constitutes the trauma. The more you believe you are endangered, the more traumatised you will be. The bottom line of trauma is an overwhelming emotion and feeling of utter helplessness. There may or may not be bodily injury, but psychological trauma coupled with physiological upheaval that plays a leading role in the long-range effects.

Trauma comes in many forms, and Terr (1990:44) made the distinction between single blow and repeated traumas. Single shocking events can certainly produce trauma reactions (repeated traumas) in individuals and Terr lists it as follows:

- Natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and volcanoes.
- Criminal violence often involves single blow traumas such as robbery, rape and homicide, which not only have a great impact on the victims, but also on witnesses. There is often an overlap between single blow and repeated trauma because individuals often experience more than one crime.
- Man-made violence and trauma entails war and political trauma that could be massive in scale, severity and death.
- Physical abuse and violence escalating into emotional trauma.
- The witnessing of traumatic events and violence has a profound impact on the individual and the community.

The culmination of these traumatic events is diagnosed through the DMS-V-R as posttraumatic stress disorder or abbreviated as PTSD.

To be traumatised is to become a passive voice. O'Connor (2011:3) states that trauma inflicts wounds without words. She provides four scenarios and effects of violence or trauma on the individual and society. According to O'Connor (2010:3), trauma refers to 'the impact of violence on the individual'. But when it happens to a society it is more than trauma and can be seen as a disaster. To underline her point, she states the following: 'When suffering and loss heaped upon one person is no more than a miniscule moment in the massive destruction of a society and its habitat, violence magnifies its effects in uncountable ways' (O'Connor 2011:3).

An argument to be made by O'Connor is that disaster that is brought about by traumatic violence, 'disturb what people think, feel and believe.' These traumatic effects distort perception and influence normal life. She further states that 'human beings cannot absorb extreme violence as it occurs; they simply cannot take it' (O'Connor 2011:4).

A second point made by O'Connor, is the unutterable nature of the wounds of violence and how it is related to fragmented memories. What she means by this statement is that sometimes victims find it difficult to remember what happened to them or to give name to their experience because the circumstances were so overwhelming. The devastating effects of trauma 'suppress language and can even bring people into a state of muteness.'

A third consequence of traumatic violence is that it shuts down feelings and leaves people in shock. O'Connor postulates that as a human being, the shutdown of feelings leaves the individual almost mentally paralysed and unable to move forward on a day-to-day basis, rendering them without hope.

The last but extremely vital point that O'Connor makes, even though it might not be visible, is that trauma and disaster destroy, or at least undermine, trust in God, other people and the world: 'Trauma and disaster can leave people feeling betrayed and God-forsaken. After all, God did not protect them, nor did prayer comfort them, nor is worship any longer possible because the gods of chaos rule the cosmos' (O'Connor 2011:3-4). It can therefore be seen that the

individual becomes destitute in faith and in the ability to trust and have feelings of future hope again.

The point about trauma is not that there is suffering, disaster and violence, but how people suffer. Because the how of trauma is inevitably tied to the question of the why of trauma, the why raises certainly the question of hope and hopelessness. Beker (1987:3) writes that because 'suffering cannot be qualified, neither can it be generalised. A person's suffering is uniquely one's own, no matter how widely shared our circumstances may be.' This raises yet another question for me to be answered, and that would be whether in the mist of trauma there is a horizon of hope beyond it, and can trauma for the individual pertain a glimmer of hope in the way that trauma is dealt with?

Scholars such as Ozer, Best, Lipsey and Weiss (2003) agree that many people, who are exposed to loss or potentially traumatic events at some point in their lives, can continue to have positive experiences and show only minor and transient disruptions in their ability to function. It is as if the traumatic event created a prospect for hope. Bonanno (2008:101) proposed that the hope within trauma portrays resilience within the person experiencing the traumatic event. He writes: 'I believe that resilience is more common than is often believed, and that there are multiple and sometimes unexpected pathways to resilience.' It is also of interest to note that Bonanno further distinguished research that suggests that the personality trait of hardiness helps to buffer exposure to extreme trauma and stress. Hardiness consists of three dimensions according to Bonanno (2008:102), 'Being committed to finding meaningful purpose in life, the belief that one can influence one's surroundings and the outcome of events, and the belief that one can learn and grow from both positive and negative life experiences.' I am therefore of the opinion that trauma harness a possibility of hope and growth, not only for an individual, but also for a collective group.

2.4 Posttraumatic growth

Even though suffering and devastation grips individuals and societies, there is a phenomenon of renewal, hope and rebirth present in the mist of traumatic events. According to Tedeschi et al. (2009:1; 3),⁹ trauma has been attributed to fear, discouragement and damage in the face of adversity. It has been with us as human beings since the dawn of time and therefore the phenomenon Tedeschi and other scholars' term *posttraumatic growth* has been recognised for centuries. The term posttraumatic growth is a fairly new term that's being proposed, because there has been no single descriptive terminology that could be found to be consistent in literature since the early 1980s. Scholars have been aware of this almost unwritten phenomenon in individuals and groups in the aftermath of trauma and traumatic experiences. The resilience was measurable but a term to describe this growth process was more elusive. Various scholars, such as Yalom and Lieberman (1991:26),¹⁰ referred to this growth as 'positive psychological changes', Tennen, Affleck and Higgins (1992) saw it as 'stress-related growth', Park, Cohen and Murch (1996) described it as 'thriving' and O'Leary and Ickovics (1995) as 'positive illusions'.

2.4.1 What is posttraumatic growth?

After a comprehensive literature study and taking all the relevant descriptions into consideration, I came to the following understanding of what posttraumatic growth is. It is a positive change that occurs because of the struggle with a major life crisis and or a traumatic event. Interesting to me is the notion that individuals and collective communities can be changed by their encounters with trauma, and that these traumatic challenges and events can create radical positive outcomes for those involved.

⁹ It should be noted that this study is using both the 1998 and 2009 edition of Tedeschi, Park and Calhoun, *Posttraumatic growth: positive changes in the aftermath of crisis*. It was first published in 1998 and the 2009 edition has a few amendments.

¹⁰ References about different scholar perspectives were taken from the work of Tedeschi et al. 2009 and for this study a summary is given.

The reason why I also choose the term posttraumatic growth is to concur with Tedeschi et al. (2009:3). This description of the term indicates that the individual or the collective community have developed beyond the level of the traumatic experience, elevating them to a new level of psychological thinking and when this happens, it means that there is growth. Human suffering over time have been described by various religious and other types of social literature as an experience that brings people closer together as individuals and collective groups, but also in wisdom, truth and their relationship with God. A few examples are given in Tedeschi et al. (1998:4), where cultural traditions have incorporated the possibility of hope and change in the reverberation of trauma in the stories of life, such as the emergence of the rainbow after the Flood, and after the crucifixion of Christ, there were forgiveness of sin for all people who believed that He was the Son of God. What is reasonably new though, is the systematic study of this phenomenon by psychologists, counsellors and theologians as a scientific investigation.

For trauma to have growth and hope as an outcome, certain traits must be instilled and nurtured in an individual, as well as a community, that experienced a traumatic event. The literature refers to hope as resilience. Wainrib (2006:71) writes that research construes resilience as hardiness, sense of coherence, stress inoculation and toughening. Through the study of the relevant subject literature, it became apparent that the focus is mainly on the reason for the trauma. The subsequent behaviour related to a traumatic experience and many reactions or behavioural patterns were attributed to experiences of fear, discouragement and damages that were faced in the onslaught of adversity. The positive aspect of trauma is neglected or not seen as relevant when trauma is experienced. Even scholars within the field, such as Tedeschi, Park and Calhoun (2009), concur that a small amount of literature focuses on the prevention of negative outcomes, as well as on how individuals and communities can successfully cope within these negative circumstances. Posttraumatic growth is therefore for me, not only a possible or even debatable result because trauma was experienced, but it must be seen as a process and an outcome. Just as trauma has an onslaught and a reverberating consequence, so does posttraumatic growth initiates a coping

process and resilience with an outcome of strength and growth. Most of us, when we face suffering and trauma, will have a variety of reactions. Just because individuals or collective communities experience growth, it does not mean that they will not suffer. Despair and distress are typical when we face traumatic events.

2.4.2 What forms does posttraumatic growth takes?

A critical question in this research on trauma within a prophetic biblical context such as Isaiah is, who is resilient? Will it be possible for me as a theological scholar to draw a conclusion on this matter? Experts indicate that through research certain variables can play a role. The research includes case studies encompassing various traumatic circumstances and events. Variables coming into play are personality, resilience promoting environments, safe social environments to facilitate coping, social capital and physical environment (Calhoun and Tedeschi 2006:30-36). The understanding of this study is that personality factors, including a sense of coherence, hardiness and optimism play a role. Calhoun and Tedeschi (2006:31) writes that 'optimism is the stable, generalized expectancy or belief that one will experience good things in life and that the future outcomes will be positive.' Tedeschi et al. (2009:9) concur with Calhoun and Tedeschi (2006:32) that a sense of coherence is an internal resource consisting of three interrelated components: The first component is comprehensibility. What is meant with comprehensibility is the extent to which individuals perceive the situations that confront them as predictable. An attribute, I believe that is valuable in prophetic circumstances as it entails prophetic utterance. The second component is manageability, which mean the extent to which people perceive their resources to be adequate to meet situational demands. This is especially true when a war is threatening as is relevant in the case of Judah. The last component is meaningfulness, which implies the extent to which people feel that life is emotionally meaningful and that everyday life has more challenges than hindrances. This is a component that is vital in a day-to-day relationship with Yahweh and the people of Judah because with Isaiah's prophetic guidance,

provided that if they adhere to it, it creates an on going relationship with Yahweh.

2.4.3 Domains of individual posttraumatic growth

One of the most famous autobiographical accounts of an individual's posttraumatic growth is that of Victor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor (1963). In his well-known book – *Man's search for meaning* – he shows how an existential understanding of suffering, despair and helplessness can be used to cope with trauma.

Tedeschi et al. (2009:18-23) categorised individual growth into five domains that will be used for this delineation of the domains. However, more relevant research¹¹ will be used to strengthen these categories. The five domains are firstly, personal strength that includes feelings of becoming stronger and more confident. After surviving trauma, an individual can experience a greater sense of strength. Secondly, an individual may have changed priorities and according to Lindstrom et al. (2013:50), cognitive reconstruction takes place where the individual's priorities changes and life is being appreciated. It is evident of war survivors where they become more appreciative of life. The third domain is improved relationships and this includes relationships with family, friends, neighbours, other trauma survivors in a collective community and even strangers. A fourth domain is personal change in philosophies. The individual in a traumatic event is almost always confronted with morality and they realise how precious life is. Lastly is spiritual development. Because of being confronted with trauma and a traumatic event, the individual experience some kind of religious belief and perception of growth regarding religious and spiritual matters (Lindstrom et al. 2013:54). Faith and belief may increase after trauma and that can contribute as a coping mechanism for growth to follow. It is, however, important to note that one does not need to have all five domains to experience posttraumatic growth, even one or two domains could

¹¹ The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory of Lindstrom, Cann, Calhoun and Tedeschi (2013) will be one of the research factors mentioned.

be sufficient to indicate posttraumatic growth. Even more important is that posttraumatic growth may be in existence with despair.

2.4.4 Communal coping as a collective response

Posttraumatic growth and the prospect of hope are not only found in individuals but also in a collective group. The way in which a collective group perceive itself in difficult circumstances, affects the way in which they deal with trauma as a unit. It not only influences the individual's coping strategies, but the outcome of self and that of the collective group. The community in the event of a traumatic occurrence or incident can conceive collective interactions as communal coping. This communal coping response is a process in which problem solving takes place within a context of social relationships within a community. Communities perceive the traumatic event to be 'our' problem instead of 'their' problem and are willing to take responsibility for the outcome of the trauma (Lyons et al. 1998:579). The main features of communal coping according to Little et al. (2011:411) are: (a) shared collective experience; (b) shared consideration; (c) social sharing of the situation; (d) mobilisation of social relations where they will share responsibilities. Tedeschi et al. (1998:10-12) further postulates that traumatic events can promote profound social change. The authors further reverberate the survivor versus the victim label, determines how people will cope and deal with trauma. 'The label of survivor subtly introduces people affected by trauma to the idea that they have a special status and strength.' Self-reliance and vulnerability are also seen as types of growth outcomes. Vulnerability can be described as an awareness of intensified understanding of their vulnerability, morality, and the preciousness and fragility of life. Self-reliance implies that 'if I survived this, I can handle anything.' The only way to test self-reliance is when another traumatic event occurs and the way it is handled can create a sense of being stronger with better coping strategies.

Further literary research on the aspect of a collective response as a posttraumatic growth outcome, several collective growth strategies have been identified. Scholars such as Aldao and Nolen-Hoeksema (2010), Web et al.

(2012) and Villagrán et al. (2014) unanimously concur that coping as a growth opportunity is aimed at changing the situation and the social relationship and focuses on support of the group.

2.4.5 Environmental factors

In addition to individual responses, environmental factors also play a role in being resilient and hopeful. Literature findings suggest that these individual responses have been associated with various within the environmental sphere including the physical environment, social support and a safe social capital. These factors can be symbolised as a complex mosaic, and each mosaic plays an important role within the posttraumatic growth experience.

In this section, these factors will be discussed in an attempt to firstly clarify it and to illustrate the significance of these factors as contributing aspects of posttraumatic growth. Lepore and Revenson (2006:32)¹² write that the physical environment, safe social environments and a social capital take the responsibility of 'being resilient' away from the individuals and place it on situations or settings.

This social support is an important factor for collective communities. Interaction between individuals and communities after any traumatic experience has the propensity to form a collective community. Many researchers in the field of trauma and resilience suggest that individuals who have confidence in others are more resilient. The aforementioned scholars come to the supposition that:

Disclosure and receipt of social support may lead to resilience through a number of mechanisms. Helpful, pleasant interactions with others provide opportunities to express feelings and concerns (emotional disclosure), and help individuals to more fully process traumatic events

¹² Lepore and Revenson in Calhoun and Tedeschi (2006:32-36) refer to all the various environmental factors.

and come to a better understanding of the issues involved. Supportive transactions may provide specific suggestions for coping and validation of worth. Through these mechanisms, social support can facilitate coping and reduce emotional distress (Lepore & Revenson 2006:33).

Another resilience-promoting environmental factor is social capital, which has been described by Masten and Reed (2006:34) as an environment that is safe and non-pathogenic, therefore having a moderate amount of control, predictability and stimulation. These further qualifying features include symbolic and spiritual elements; there is a certain amount of flexibility as well as stability. Within this safe space there is also a variety of social networks.

It is therefore clear that social relationships, mutual trust and community participation are vital components in the way trauma is addressed in communities. Lastly, the physical environment forms the outer safety component for communities to weather the storm. Researchers have shown that communities faced with disasters such as floods, droughts and the persistent looming of war, can deteriorate in social support resources because of the chronic stress factors within a physical environment. The difference between despair and hope in a community threatened with trauma is the ability to be flexible enough to maintain social roles and responsibilities.

Trauma is not a single faceted experience but is a balancing act between competing spiritual, emotional and physical responses to maintain a stable equilibrium. Hence, it will be imperative in the study of Isaiah to take a fresh look at the various ways Isaiah and the people of Judah responded with despair and hope in what otherwise would seem to be potentially debilitating events.

As a preliminary conclusion, it can be stated that trauma, the concept of despair and resilience are embedded in hope, rendering it an elusive and multidimensional nature. The conceptualisation of the broader traumatic term differs according to theoretical assumptions, socio-cultural contexts, and an

overall philosophical and more over biblical paradigm shift is needed. Within the context of the present study, trauma is defined as profound distress experienced by an individual and experienced as an assault on the individual's spirit, identity and self-worth. These feelings of despair and hopelessness can emerge in the aftermath of a traumatic event or can gain continuity due to the ongoing or reoccurring of further traumatic events. However, trauma is not only confined to the experiences of the individual, but has also a profound effect on a group or community. I concur with Bracken (2002:400) that trauma is continuously shaped by the individual and the collective community's 'idiosyncratic' ways of interpreting their traumatic experiences, which are entrenched in history, traditions and culture. It is therefore suggested that trauma (despair) and posttraumatic growth (hope) are not completely separate processes, but that it is closely interrelated. An example to illustrate this hypothesis, is of an individual or collective group whom may experience growth and hope in his/her/their spiritual domain of life by feeling more trusting of God even though they might still experience major suffering. Since it has been repeatedly suggested that trauma and resilience are shaped by personal experiences, history and culture, the following chapters will try to prove how these components can be applicable to the biblical study of trauma within the periscope of Isaiah 7 and 8.

2.5 Summary

This chapter began by giving a historical summation of trauma studies. A comprehensive literature study of available literature in the wider field of trauma was undertaken. A variety of social science fields were researched such as psychology, sociology and philosophy to gain knowledge and insight into the concept of trauma, the symptoms of trauma and the effects of trauma on the individual and the collective community. The literature study revealed that the impact of trauma is not always negative but that there is an underlying potential for posttraumatic growth not only in the individual but also for the collective community as a group. The next chapter will address trauma in prophecy within a biblical context and understanding of biblical trauma.

Chapter 3

Trauma in prophecy

Experiencing trauma is an essential part of being human. History is written in blood.

B van der Kolk (1996)

3.1 Introduction

While there is abundant social science literature on the conceptualisation of trauma, it is surprising to note the lack of trauma literature focusing on biblical trauma, especially in literature focusing on the pre-Babylonian period. A gap, this study will try to fill. The aim of this chapter is to highlight the main theological assumptions that constitute the epistemological framework of theological, trauma and posttraumatic growth references. However, as a biblical scholar, I need to be aware of the hermeneutical lenses I am wearing whilst working with the biblical and the psychological texts pertaining trauma. Theories of trauma are greatly embedded in the Western domain, whereas the biblical text is not only ancient, but also enthralled in a vastly different era and culture. The literature studies that were done on trauma, posttraumatic stress, posttraumatic growth and war literature, made me realise that even though there is an almost 2500-year time lapse, trauma was a common thread intertwined in people's lives throughout history. Therefore, this chapter will aim to find common ground within both the study fields of social science and theology, and to discover parallels between trauma and the biblical text regarding the Isaiah's prophecy.

Boase and Frechette (2016:4) are of the opinion that there are currently three dominant interdisciplinary fields that are important for biblical trauma studies and these are: psychology, sociology and literary and cultural studies. Boase and Frechette (2016:4) further explain why these fields are so important for biblical trauma studies today for psychology contributes to the understanding of the effects that trauma has on the survival, coping mechanisms and

resilience of the individual. The field of sociology gives insights into the collective experience of trauma for the collective group or community. The benefit of literary and cultural studies according to Boase and Frechette (2016:6), is that it opens up pathways to explore the role and function of texts because it gives a witness account of traumatic suffering whilst also constructing 'discursive' spaces for recovery and resilience. The build-up of individual stress reactions leads to collective trauma and Boase and Frechette (2016:6) are of the opinion that interdisciplinary field could give insights to the understanding of collective trauma. They elaborate that insights of psychology and sociology attempts to identify the 'reflexes' of trauma and literature and cultural studies can aid in the understanding how a collective group processes trauma.

Many theological scholars such as Mills (2007), Stulman and Kim (2010), O'Connor (2011), Smith-Christopher (2011), Carr (2014), Becker, Dochorn and Holt (2014) have pondered and written about suffering and pain in the Bible. It is a constant variable in the back of a theologian's mind when working and confronted with the content of the Bible. Rambo (2010:4) makes the hypothetical statement that biblical scholars 'have always been engaged' with the 'perennial' question of suffering. She also writes that with the rise of trauma studies and the subsequent theological engagement with it, it calls for new aspects on conversation about suffering.

Studies in trauma suggest that trauma has a double structure: the actual occurrence of the event and a belated awakening of the event. This belated awakening of the event can awaken posttraumatic stress or posttraumatic growth in an individual or a collective group.

3.2 A theology of trauma

Biblical scriptures preserve a collection of the struggle of certain ancient communities to live out their relationship with Yahweh, in their own time frames, which is unavoidably shaped by the events of their time. Hence, it is

necessary for the purpose of this study to first understand what biblical trauma is, before an attempt can be made to understand trauma in prophecy.

Anyone reading the Bible will attest that there are difficult passages and stories forged about murder (Genesis 4), rape (Genesis 34), dismemberment (Judges 19; 1 Samuel 18), kidnapping and forced marriages (Judges 21), forced migration and infanticide (Psalm 137), slavery (Exodus 21; Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 15), genocide (Joshua 1-12), cannibalism (2 Kings 6-7), political corruption (1-2 Kings), and social desolation (the Prophets).

Theologians have always been engaged with the question of suffering, is the claim that Rambo (2010:4) makes, and because of this underlying engagement, they struggle with questions such as: Is God responsible for suffering? Does God will it and why do people have to suffer? Rambo (2010:5), in her search for clarity about trauma and theology, mentioned the early work of Moltmann as far back as the early seventies. What this early work of Moltmann revolutionised was the claim that during the crucifixion, God suffered trauma Himself. Rambo (2010:5) further mentions the more recent work of theologians such as Keshgegian, Jones, Hess and Beste, whom all suggested that trauma within biblical texts calls for 'a distinctive theological articulation' to understand the unique challenges about suffering and redemption. A valuable question that is asked by Becker (2014:23), is if in theology it would be possible to establish 'trauma studies'? She then proposes a few trauma discourse aspects to seek an answer to this question:

- It is important to reflect on when and how the trauma concept was established. Furthermore, it is important to determine what fields of study are related to the study of trauma. The different academic fields associated to trauma must be determined, for example psychology, historical, post-colonial or gender studies. Then it is also important to identify the academic subjects linked to the study of trauma, such as social science, medicine, psychology, theology and humanities. The reason for this identification of different fields is because trauma studies can build a bridge between the different schools of thought.

- Theology and the humanity might discuss the socio-cultural context in which trauma and traumatising can be found. A further discussion point will be socio-political implications and consequences.
- Theology can also make a huge contribution to the conceptualisation and subsequent understanding of patterns and traits used in identifying trauma, such as disaster, war, suffering, memory, personality and personality identification as a few examples.
- Theology can broaden the perspective on trauma through defining 'stressors' that occur over time and those who are connected to a certain point in time. It would be imperative to discern if the list of 'stressors' in ancient and modern society is comparable. This discernment can be two-folded – there might be an argument for discontinuity and one for continuity. The examples that are given are firstly for discontinuity. Paul's narrative accounts and living conditions are far removed from today's modern society and travel experiences. The example for continuity that is given relates to the implications and consequences of the temple destruction in 587 BCE and 70 CE in Jerusalem. It is stated that it is quite similar to the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001. The continuity is seen in the monumental destruction caused by war and terrorism (Becker 2014: 24-26).

Ancient text and biblical texts provides a collection of information on how to cope with pain, fear, wounding, guilt, shame, despair and hope. The search for these signs of trauma within the layers of the text can only enhance us as biblical scholars. On this note, Rambo (2016:5) remarks that in the 'Christian tradition' trauma and suffering is often without proper thought, linked to the discourse of sin, guilt and fault and it is a challenge that theology will need to address by looking at the texts and trauma anew.

3.3 Trauma in prophecy

The physical word prophecy carries a silent judgment and warning metaphor without a prophet even uttering a word. Prophets in ancient societies were perceived as the spokesmen of a given social group. Brueggemann (2001:180) explains:

A prophet is a poetic figure who stands outside the mainstream of the public power and exposes what's going on. The prophets are people who feel pain and are enormously sensitive to what the public processes are doing to others.

He further states that in the Old Testament a prophet is always the counterpart of the king. Kings want to organise public power without reference to human dimension. The prophet keep insisting that if the king organises public power without reference to the human dimension, he is going to bring death on himself and a lot of other people. I believe death equals extreme trauma and disobedience equals intense trauma within the prophet. The prophetic message carries an underlying traumatic element of despair, but also the futuristic promise of hope, if there is obedience.

It seems that tension between suffering and hope is a basic premise and Beker (1987:17) writes that tension itself has become a contradiction, because it suffocates hope and compels resignation and despair. The interlaced relationship between suffering and hope creates not only the possibility of hope in the presence of suffering and despair, but can also influence the way in which suffering is related to hope. One reads in Psalm 23:4:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.

This quotation from the Hebrew scripture demonstrates that the Psalmist is urging the listener and reader to have courage and to persevere in the mist of evil and adversity.

The question therefore begs to be asked: If trauma today is seen as a global phenomenon, why shouldn't the biblical 'world' with all their encompassing historical, social and constant threads also not be seen as a traumatic community? Stulman and Kim (2010:1) believe that there should be

an attempt to read prophetic literature as war-thorn artefacts, disturbing cultural expressions of disaster and tapestries of hope intended to help devastated communities survive massive loss.

Reading prophetic literature with a sensitivity to the effects that trauma have on individuals and communities, Stulman and Kim (2010:7) asserts that biblical prophecy tries to find meaning in overwhelming suffering and to create a way for hope in the trauma-stricken communities. The current work of Boase and Frechette (2016:13) recommends a heuristic approach to biblical trauma. What they suggest is sensitivity to the nexus between historical events and literary representation. I concur with Boase and Frechette that sensitivity is needed in understanding their relationship between the text and the traumatic experience. Even though the work of Boase and Frechette (2016:13) explains the possibility of biblical trauma in general terms I believe the suppositions that they make, is exceptionally valuable to understand trauma in prophecy.

Scholars working with trauma and the prophetic text can easily use trauma theories to clarify and explain disaster, war and despair. O'Conner (2014:211) makes the statement with which I totally concur, that the concepts and theories are merely chosen without a proper understanding of a given trauma theory, to justify and help the study of ancient texts. The proposition that is made is that there should be the same urgency to gain knowledge about trauma theories, as there is to gain knowledge and insight into biblical texts.

Here the warning words of Smith-Christopher (2011:257)¹³ must be heeded that trauma theories must be critically studied before adopting it to passages in the prophetic text.

When working with trauma theories in prophetic material, the main factor that needs to be considered is the fact that trauma was only given a diagnostic description in 1980 when it was first entered into the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM-III). This diagnostic system was not available in biblical times, however, when reading Isaiah, one can pick up and see the trauma in the lives of Isaiah and the people of Judah having the DSM as a reference base. Smith-Christopher (2011:256) rightly states 'the potential for psychological assessments of the experience of warfare in ancient Israel are products of the significant changes in social, psychological, and anthropological analysis of the contemporary world.' Keeping Smith-Christopher's supposition in mind, can we use trauma studies to construct an idea of the impact that violence, and a threat of war had on the people of Judah? Furthermore, can current studies on trauma and the impact of trauma such as war in a way shed light on the text in Isaiah? Smith-Christopher (2011:264) further asks the question if the events of disaster that were faced in ancient times actually caused trauma for the people involved? I concur with Smith-Christopher regarding this question, but I would, however, not only refer to disaster in this context but to traumatic events in a broader scope because trauma encompasses a wider emotional and physical response whether in modern or ancient times. Regarding Isaiah, the utterance, response of the king and Judah provide guidance to measure the trauma that was experienced and how they coped with it. Smith-Christopher (2011:272) sums it up when he says: 'Surely our reading of social literature would help to mitigate any tendencies to forget that ancient Israelites fought real wars that featured death and injury and caused real suffering and trauma.'

¹³ In Kelle et al. (2011:255-258), Smith-Christopher regales that 'there are times, however, when the apparent "evidence" is not so explicit.'

Almost all the literature on trauma and prophecy focuses on the exilic and post-exilic periods. Stulman (2014:180) writes that reading the prophets as 'ancient Israel's trauma' literature is complex because it is a response to the massive collapse of social and symbolic structures and this is largely the result of war, forced relocation and captivity. Stulman (2014:181) further states that the two focal points of trauma are the fall of Samaria in the eighth-century BCE by the Assyrian military and the collapse of Jerusalem in the sixth century. The statement made by Stulman, verifies my introductory remarks that the focus is mainly on the exilic and post-exilic periods. Scholars such as Smith-Christopher (2011:2014), O'Connor (2014), Rambo (2010) and Mills (2007) mainly aim to address the trauma markers within the exilic and post-exilic period as it provides physical and social evidence of trauma, traumatic experiences and events according to the social science descriptions of what trauma is. O'Connor (2014:212) goes as far as to say that trauma theories can broaden a scholar's knowledge about life in ancient Judah during and after the Exile or Babylonian period. It seems as if biblical scholars, through their obtained knowledge of what trauma is, disregard the pre-exilic period as a time where trauma could be evident. A thorough study of trauma, of what trauma is and the growth prospects that trauma provides, clearly set the scene for research opportunities to investigate the impact of trauma theories in the lives of the Judean people in pre-exilic times. And it is precisely this gap in the research that this study will try and investigate.

Even though Carr (2011:299) refers in his study to exilic communities, he assumes that 'many of the features we now see enshrined in material associated with *pre-exilic* prophets strongly correlates with the dynamics of a traumatized exilic community.' He further writes that these communities and individuals experience feelings of despair and shame. It is his explanation that these feelings are common when trauma is suffered or if there is a looming threat or the possibility that a traumatic event can ensue. I concur with this conjecture, because despair, shame and anxiety are usually feelings that are experienced in the wake of a traumatic occurrence. A distinction is made between despair and guilt where guilt is seen as a bad decision or set of decisions that led to the agonising present of desperation. Despair can also

be something to learn from whereas shame is self-blame because of a catastrophe that occurred due to a bad decision.

Regarding Isaiah 7 and 8, both these feelings are visible through prophetic utterance, metaphors and choices. These aspects will be examined and explained in the following chapters. The historical scene for Isaiah 7 and 8 is set in the pre-exilic period and Carr (2011:300) writes that material associated with the pre-exilic prophets, the traumatic event is usually attributed on the community and with the major prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel the indictment of the people is eminent.

If Isaiah chapters 1-12 as a corpus are studied with regards to trauma, Hoppe (2012:11) postulates that the first section of the book begins with 'an indictment of Jerusalem's infidelity' (1:2-9) and ends with a prayer of thanksgiving for its restoration in the future (12:1-6), confirming traumatic disaster and despair, but also reverberating posttraumatic growth and hope. Carr (2011:302) elaborates that themes of judgment and hope is not new, but that trauma studies can offer insight into the dynamics on the rebuilding of trust and hope in the adversity of trauma. Hence, I am of the opinion that within the layers of the book of Isaiah, regarding chapters 7 and 8, trauma is intertwined in prophecy, individuals, social settings, history and communities. The repercussion of trauma and the remnants of the impact can be found in the use of metaphors and imagination, prophetic utterance and looming disasters and war with the constant spark of hope.

Finally, the process of understanding human suffering, despair and hope is utterly complex but the literature and research in the study fields of social science and biblical studies provide a sensible reference base to conduct an in-depth study of Isaiah 7 and 8, utilising an interdisciplinary literature reference. There are enough correlating factors to pursue in the following chapters to research and find the traces of trauma within chapters 7 and 8.

3.4 Summary

The aim of this chapter was to study the concept of biblical trauma to gain an understating of trauma in prophecy. Biblical texts and in particular the prophetic books, contains a vast amount of information on suffering, pain, despair but also survival, salvation and hope. The literature study that was done revealed that there are hardly any academic writings about trauma and the pre-exilic period of Judah. Most scholars focused on the exile and post-exile periods as severe traumatic events. It was however determined in this chapter that trauma is an integral part of prophecy. With the knowledge gained, the purpose of the ensuing chapters will be, to address the historical traumatic climate in Isaiah 7 and 8.

Chapter 4

The historical traumatic climate of Isaiah 7 and 8

War does not determine who is right – only who is left.

Bertrand Russell

2.1 Introduction

For the Kingdom of Judah, the eight-seventh century BCE attested to be an important period in their history as a nation. The aim of this chapter is to deal with the material of Isaiah 7 and 8 in the respective historical traumatic climate and setting, and to illuminate the impact of the imminent Syro-Ephraimite and Assyrian threats as a traumatic event within a traumatic milieu.

The purpose is to explore the tension of looming war within the social setting to better understand the traumatic impact on the individual and the community of the time, through the text of Isaiah 7 and 8. These two chapters in Isaiah belong substantially to the time of the Syrian-Ephraimite invasion and the possible invasion from the Assyrians after King Ahaz asked for their protection against the Syro-Ephraimite war.

The so-called Isaiah *Denkschrift* will also be discussed as a unit because chapters 7 and 8 forms part of this pericope and function within the memoirs unit of the texts. The aim however, is not to do a comprehensive study of the *Denkschrift*, but just to give an overview to aid the better understanding of Isaiah 7 and 8.

A further investigative objective of this chapter is to take the different biblical reports into consideration to give a better understanding of the historical backdrop of the events pertained in Isaiah 7 and 8, II Kings 16 and II Chronicles 28. Knowledge of these texts will set the tone for the discussion of the so-called *Denkschrift* and how chapters 7 and 8 fits within this unit.

Relevant literature and commentaries will be researched to achieve the goals set for this chapter.

4.2 Judah threatened

The end of the second half of the 8th century BCE saw the kingdom of Judah as a modest political state, ruled by the royal house of David. There were, however, two conflicts, which brought danger to the kingdom of Judah. In both cases the life of the southern kingdom, Judah was threatened. The name of the first conflict is the Syro-Ephraimite War (734-732 BCE). The second conflict, at least as threatening, if not more so, pertain to the invasion of the Assyrians under Sennacherib (704-701 BCE). Assyria became the powerhouse and De Jong (2007:192) construes that the takeover of Syria-Palestine by the Assyrians in the late 8th century, exposed Judah not only to international trade but also to neighboring nations. Hom (2012:1) concurs with De Jong when he rightly states that Assyria is the first ancient Near East super power and that they played an important role in the rise and fall of many nations. The might of the Assyrians is something that the nation of Judah could surely attest to. The political dynamics in the then ancient Near East catapulted Judah into the Assyrian economic sphere.

In 736 BCE Pekahiah, who was murdered two years into his reign by Pekah, ruled Israel. The Syro-Ephraimite crisis was largely a regional conflict between Rezin of Syria, Pekah of Israel and Ahaz of Judah. King Rezin of Aram (Syria) initiated a coalition. Dekker (2012:42)¹⁴ explains that within this coalition with Rezin, only Pekah of Israel joined, but that King Ahaz of Judah declined this collaboration of nations. In 734 BCE, both Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Israel were under siege from the Assyrians. Dekker (2012:42) further states that Rezin and Pekah campaigned against Jerusalem to force the Judeans to participate in the coalition. The relative independence of Judah dramatically changed during the reign of King Ahaz (742-727 BCE). This campaign is known as the Syro-Ephraimite War between 734-732 BCE.

¹⁴ Dekker (2012:42) also mentions that the Assyrians frustrated the plans of Damascus and Israel by destroying Damascus and making Israel an Assyrian province.

During Isaiah's prophecies and ministry time, Assyria dominated the Middle East. During the rule of Tiglath-pileser III much was done to strengthen the Assyrian Empire. The reign of Tiglath-pileser III reached its pinnacle of his power under his able leadership and Ludlow (1982:20)¹⁵ further explains that he developed a new type of imperialistic policy. And through this new policy he strengthened the royal administration. What made Assyria such a force to be reckoned with was the way Tiglath-pileser III dealt with his enemies. Ludlow (1982:23) describes it as a step-by-step distraction of the independence of the vassal states, such as Judah, around him and thereby incorporating them into the provincial structures of the Assyrian Empire. Assyria showed their military might through harassment and threats. Both these tactics, created traumatic experiences, anxiety and fear for the people of Judah, the King and the prophet. As Assyria's territory expansion threat moved toward Judah, the threat of being invaded was particularly frustrating and frightening. These feelings of frustrations and feeling frightened, all contributes to trauma experienced by the people of Judah and it was brought on not only by the pressure asserted from Aram and Ephraim, but also the threatening Assyrian expansion to concur Judah as an Assyrian vassal state.

The relationship between the prophet Isaiah and the Judean king Ahaz occurred when armies of Syria and Israel tried to attack Jerusalem but failed. Irvine (1990:2) writes that this relationship between Isaiah and Ahaz in the midst of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis is evident in the *Denkschrift*¹⁶ that contains a large deposit of the prophet's thoughts on this crisis and the role players in this persisting threat.

Several years after Isaiah experienced a vision of Yahweh in the divine council (Isaiah 6), his role as prophet leads him to a direct encounter with King Ahaz. Against the advice of the prophet Isaiah, King Ahaz decided to not

¹⁵ In the book of Ludlow (1982:19-25) he gives a historical background of the time of Isaiah throughout his life. For this study the focus will be on the Syro-Ephraimite war and the Assyrian invasion.

¹⁶ The context of the war within the *Denkschrift* will be addressed later in the chapter.

trust in Yahweh for survival but to pin his hopes on the Assyrians (Isaiah 7 and 8). This Judahite king was being threatened as mentioned before by two nations to the north, Israel and Syria. These two states had wanted Judah to ally itself with them to create an even larger coalition that they hoped would be able to overcome the threat posed by an attack from the Assyrians. Peterson (2002:51) sketches the dire situation further when he remarks that Israel was desperate for help because they had already lost some land to the Assyrians.

This young King Ahaz was no match for the political trouble he inherited, and Anderson (1980:308) remarks that in the prevailing circumstances, 'a disaster seemed unavoidable.' A plot was made among the small western states to stop the advance of Assyria and these one-time enemies, Israel and Syria, became allies for a short while.

The crisis that Ahaz and his advisors had to face was complex. Matthews (2001:90) believes whatever decision King Ahaz made, there would be calamitous consequences. King Ahaz called Tiglath-Pileser III to help him and as a vassal state, Judah had a treaty obligation to suppress any rebellion against Assyria. This proved to be problematic, because as a covenant partner of Israel, Judah had a legal responsibility to support Israel's struggle for freedom. The ominous consequences of Ahaz's decisions were twofold; if Judah did not join Syria and Israel's struggle against Assyria, Israel and Syria would invade Judah, but if Judah joined their struggle, Assyria would certainly punish Judah. The king and Judah could not win and a looming threat of disaster and war hanged over King Ahaz and Judah.

4.3 Biblical reports of the Syro-Ephraimite and Assyrian crisis

Isaiah chapters 7 and 8 reflect a particular period in the history of Judah and it is set against the historical background of a threatening war, anxiety and despair. Whilst studying the text of Isaiah 7 and 8, biblical commentaries and academic literature regarding the subject matter, it became clear that the text

of II Kings 16, II Chronicles 28 and Isaiah 7 and 8 all presented with accounts of the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis and the threatening Assyrian invasion. This particular period in history has an undercurrent of stress and fear due to the international political circumstances that Judah faced and subsequently affected the social, internal political and religious life in Judah.

It is, however, important to note that these are three separate accounts with different details and emphases on the crisis. For this study a summary of the accounts of 2 Kings 16 and 2 Chronicles 28 will be given, as it is deemed necessary for the understanding of the overall study of the text of especially Isaiah 7 as the scene for the pending war and threat, not only on the king but also on the people of Judah. These early events later culminate the effects and the experiences of despair and hope suffered by the individuals, such as Isaiah and the King, but also of the community as a collective unit. The echoes of these encounters intensify into Isaiah 8 with their own consequences of traumatic experiences. These three accounts clearly depict traumatic turbulent times, not only for King Ahaz but also for the prophet Isaiah and the nation of Judah.

4.3.1 2 Kings 16

The account in 2 Kings 16 narrates the reign of King Ahaz. The focus of 2 Kings 16 is therefore much broader than only that of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis and offers a perspective on the situation in which King Ahaz founded himself.

Commentators, such as Irvine (1990:76) and De Jong (2007:63) concur that the unit in II Kings 16 verses 1-4 exhibits the following structure:

1. Details of Ahaz's reign in verses 1-2a¹⁷
2. Evaluation of Ahaz's reign in verses 2b-4

¹⁷ Irvine (1990:76) notes that Ahaz is the one Davidic king whose mother is not named.

These verses, according to Irvine (1990:76), also displays a general 'charge of apostasy in verses 2b-3a where it is written: 'And he did not do what was right in the eyes of Yahweh his God as David his ancestor had done.'

A further explanation is given that verses 3b-4, gives a list of Ahaz's sins as 'he did what was evil in Yahweh's eyes.' In 2 Kings 16:5-18 an account of the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis is given. For many scholars such as Childs (2001:63), De Jong (2007:63), Seitz (1993:75) and Prokhorov (2015:87), there is a direct correlation between Isaiah 7:1-13 and II Kings 16:5. Childs (2001: 64)¹⁸ states that Isaiah 7:1 has a close correlation to the text of II Kings 16:5. Modern consensus amongst scholars shows that verse 1 in Isaiah 7 indicates the encounter between the prophet and king and the main detractor is the Syro-Ephraimitic war. The difference between these two passages, as Seitz (1993:75) postulates, is the fact that both go very different in their way regarding the context. De Jong (2007:63) assumes that Isaiah 7:1 is founded on 2 Kings 16:5 and therefore gives a different version of the events. 2 Kings offer a summary of the events and Isaiah 7:1-2 states that the military attack against Jerusalem failed. Furthermore, 2 Kings 16:5-9 deals with the Syro-Ephraimitic attack. Irvine (1990:83) gives an account of this attack in 2 Kings 16: 5-9; Rezin and Pekah 'were unable to fight' and were not able to besiege the Judean king. After reading the text of 2 Kings 16:5-9 in correlation to Isaiah 7, the conclusion I came to was that in Isaiah 7 the attack and threat was aimed at Ahaz personally, but the account in 2 Kings related to the threat against the whole Jerusalem.

4.3.2 2 Chronicles 28

II Chronicles 28 commences with a description of King Ahaz's reign with the introduction in verses 1-4 and the conclusion in verses 26-27. II Chronicles 28 describes the distress of King Ahaz and Judah in this passage as divine

¹⁸ Childs (2001:65) in his book *Isaiah* mentions that older commentators to the likes of Delitzsch have thought that the editor of the book of Kings had borrowed from Isaiah.

punishment. It is as if the Chronicler has a more punitive judgment of King Ahaz than is the case in II Kings 16 and Isaiah 7. The Chronicler, according to Irvine (1990:90), further blames King Ahaz for Judah's servitude to their enemies and Ackroyd (1984:249) reached a similar conclusion that the Chronicler's portrayal of King Ahaz is a far more negative account than the 2 King's or Isaiah's version. Ackroyd (1984:253) states that Ahaz was depicted as an evil king, especially from a religious point of view because 'he did not do that which was right in the sight of the Lord.'

The body of this passage narrates a few important events. It firstly accounts the attack from the Syrians on Ahaz where they took some of the Judeans captive. The text in verse 5-6 read:

Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him (King Ahaz) into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter. For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah a hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers.

(2 Chronicles 28:5-6)

Furthermore 2 Chronicles 28:6 reports that in one day alone Pekah killed a hundred and twenty thousand soldiers and Vasholz (1987:80) writes that it is of this crisis that Isaiah 7 and 8 speaks. It is this crisis that is the turning point, as the possible threat of being overcome by various enemies, shatters the morale of Jerusalem's populace and despair sets in as a traumatic experience. As the events of this chapter unfold, the nation of Judah already faced a terrible tragedy, and was devastated and lost in total despair. A further consequence of the traumatic and turbulent events is reflected in verses 2 Chronicles 16-21 where Ahaz puts his trust in the kings of Assyria instead of Yahweh, even though Isaiah offered him a sign for assurance of Yahweh's help in Isaiah 7:1-2. In his time of distress, King Ahaz sinned by doing what was wrong in Yahweh's sight. Irvine (1990:90) explains that he

sacrificed to Syrian gods and he even closed the Temple to worship foreign gods. The distress was not confined to the King alone, but it became a political distress for Isaiah and the nation of Judah. This can be recounted in 2 Chronicles 28:5-21. It is important to note that verses 22-25 constitute severe criticism of the king's wrongdoings and Irvine (1990:92) postulates that the text of 2 Chronicles 28 demonstrates three important points:

The religious sins of Ahaz made him the worst king in Judean history, Yahweh punished the faithlessness of the king by giving him into the hands of his enemies and in the time of distress, Ahaz did not repent. He thus received full and just retribution.

Taking these conclusive aspects into account to highlight the distress and despair, the King, Isaiah and the nation of Judah found themselves in the social fibre of a community that is damaged, leading to changes in their relationships within this said community. Despair and devastation can lead to blame and here Frechette (2015:25) concurs by saying that survivors could often blame not only themselves, but also others. 2 Chronicles 28, explains the distress not only of King Ahaz, but also Yahweh's punishment on Judah. The sins of King Ahaz led to his political demise and suffering of Judah. I believe this will add up to the collective traumatic experience of despair as the text of Isaiah 7 and 8, 2 Kings 16 and 2 Chronicles 28 so clearly displays.

4.4 The so-called *Denkschrift* (Isaiah 6:1-9:6): an ensuing point in the traumatic historical climate in Isaiah 7 and 8

Over the years, the book Isaiah has been debated and re-debated by academic scholars. Many opinions and exegetical foundations were written down with reasons to support the hypothesis for a *Denkschrift* and albeit just as many reasons were also given to disregard such a notion. Whatever the case might be, the unit of Isaiah 6:1 to 9:6 cannot be ignored. It is, however, not the purpose of this chapter or the study to defend or refute the so-called *Denkschrift* or the validity of text as a unit within the broader chapter of Isaiah

1-12. It is the aim of this chapter to understand the traumatic historical background alluded to by the chapters of the *Denkschrift*, and to identify the traumatic events and circumstances as it is presented in these chapters. A second reason is to understand the historical content of chapters 7 and 8 within the broader unit of the so-called *Denkschrift*. It should, however, be noted that chapter 7 and 8 will be addressed in the following chapters of this study.

The first question that could be asked is, what does the word *Denkschrift* mean? The 20th century debate regarding the *Denkschrift* originated in the work of Duhm (1914:xi) where he suggested:

Aller Warscheinlichkeit nach liegt ihr ein älteres von Jesaia selbst redigiertes Buch zu Grunde, das jetzt jedoch teil verstümmelt, teils vermehrt ist.

The description *Denkschrift* came later when Budde in the 1920's presented his work to show that the unit should be an independent composition. The term given to this unit by Budde means 'memoir' and that is because of the autobiographical style of the unit. The narrative suggests that Isaiah wrote this first-person account. Sweeney (2010:58) suggests that it not only reflects Isaiah's experience, but also reflects on the destruction of Israel and the suppression of Judah to become a vassal of the Assyrians.

Even though De Jong (2007:19) makes the statement that 'the *Denkschrift*-hypothesis can no longer function as a pillar of the exegesis of First Isaiah', this unit contains explanations for Yahweh's decision to bring punishment on Judah. A point *in lieu* made by Groenewald (2009:79), is that these chapters 6-8 form the 'nucleus' of chapters 1-12. Within this nucleus a social network and community, who endured suffering and despair, is embedded. I agree with the delineation of the chapters as being the nucleus in the broader sense of encompassing chapters, and I concur with Prokhorov (2015:49), who writes that the *Denkschrift* may contain 'reflective and formative elements, related to

the social order of the community' and that these elements may not be ignored.

Chapter 6 of Isaiah is essentially a vision report. The reference to King Uzziah's death dates this vision experience and the beginning of Isaiah's prophetic ministry to about 738 BCE. It seems, however, difficult to determine the exact date of Uzziah's death and Blenkinsopp (2000:224) believes it coincides with the Syro-Ephraimite war dating it not earlier than 736 BCE. In this inaugural vision, Yahweh called Isaiah to his prophetic ministry and Yahweh gave him a specific message. Roberts (2015:92) postulates that the view that Isaiah had of Yahweh, was one where Yahweh was sitting enthroned as King, surrounded by his 'heavenly ministers'. He further assumes that the image that was formed of Yahweh was deeply entrenched in the ancient Jerusalemite tradition, according to 'which the Davidic monarch was simply God's regent on earth' (Roberts 2015:92). An interesting observation made by Prokhorov (2015:64) is that the opening line of the *Denkschrift* shows a juxtaposition between the death of King Uzziah and Yahweh's kingship in Isaiah 6. The significance of this juxtaposition is described by Prokhorov (2015:65) as the starting point of discourse which indicate the markers of 'uncertainty, vulnerability and anticipation of change.' These markers are signs and symptoms of trauma that affects not only the individual, but also the collective community.

The immediate impact of this vision on Isaiah can only be described as one of sheer terror, and Roberts (2015:99) refers to the biblical text when he postulates that, according to Israelite tradition, no one could see Yahweh and live. He further reverberates that Isaiah had a normal human response and he cried out 'woe is me!', implying tremendous fear. However, a further apposition ensued when the text refers to 'unclean lips'. Roberts' explanation for this is that it moves the focus away from destruction to a situation of keeping quiet and being silent. Again, Prokhorov (2015:71) makes an interesting analogy with which I concur, when he states that 'the author of the *Denkschrift* use the vehicle of a cultic metaphor (that of impurity) in order to point out the root of the hazard, that is the tension between Yahweh's and the

messenger's status.' The impurity of the lips, I believe, in this sense, can also be attributed to the impurity within the community.

Isaiah's vision in Chapter 6 also provides the prophet with knowledge of impending disasters, such as prospects of judgment, of looming war and narrow escapes. This must create inner conflict and possible trauma in the prophet Isaiah. This is concurred by Blenkinsopp (2000:224) when he writes 'that the report has been put together as a carefully crafted dramatization of the claim that Isaiah has been admitted to the divine council, that he is therefore privy to the divine agenda, and that he has been charged to implement the agenda in the world of the Judean and international politics.'

The vision account also gives an insight into the Judean community of Isaiah in verses 9 and 10. Yahweh gives a confusing instruction to Isaiah in these verses. Firstly, in verse 9, he commands Isaiah to go to the people of Judah with the following message: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand: keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Then Yahweh gives an even more perplexing instruction to Isaiah and verse 10 reads: 'Make the heart of the people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes; and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.'

The enormity of this commission given to Isaiah by Yahweh, raised the question from Isaiah and in Isaiah 6:11 he asked: 'How long, O Lord?' The encumbrance of this commission is laden with cognitive trauma elements, visual elements of the event, loss of memory and concentration abilities, which are all markers on traumatic experiences. It is of interest to note that Roberts (2015:100) states that 'How long?' is an 'odd' question to ask, because the assumption would be that the more appropriate question would have been 'why'. He further explains that it could be a peculiar question for modern-day readers, but that it would not have been unfamiliar in the time of Isaiah.

A further reference made by Roberts (2015:100) is of the Psalmist's lament where he would ask Yahweh how long His anger or punishment would last. Reference is made to Psalm 74:10; 79:5 and 94:3. The reason then for asking 'how long' is because prophets would use time limits to confirm the legitimacy of their prophecies. Within the historical context of this event, Blenkinsopp (2000:226) observes the cultural practice of the time as the future devastation of Judah and not necessarily the Assyrian conquest of Israel and Syria, because it is the people of Judah whom must become unyielding because of this commission given to Isaiah. Even though this type of question might have been commonplace in ancient times or prophecies, I agree with Stulman and Kim (2010:33) that this passage has a central theme of '*seeing and hearing*' that relates to other themes throughout the unit of '*understanding and knowing*', whereto I would like to add hope and despair.

A most important suggestion of the call narrative in Isaiah 6 is the role that Yahweh plays within this central theme of underlying destruction and threat that the people of Judah is staring in the face, and Stulman and Kim (2010:33) concur in the assessment that the call narrative in a way 'hint that God was in some sense a part of the devastation.' Within this conundrum of possible trauma, implied by Yahweh's involvement with Judah, the role players' choice and actions in this challenge will most certainly determine the outcome. The different degrees of participation and activity create, according to Prokhorov (2015:74), a 'three-level hierarchy of status' and this includes firstly Yahweh, the messenger Isaiah and the community of Judah.

Within the social structures of the Judean community, the allocations of symbolic roles are part of the culture and social perception of the time, because it is important for the national identity of a community. Moreover, for the community of Judah, who is not only facing adversaries, but are also in direct threat from Yahweh. The vision call in Chapter 6 set the tone and context for the tension of despair and hopes for the rest of the chapters in the *Denkschrift*.

Isaiah 7 construes the preceding prophecy. Chapters 7 and 8, which form the core of this study, will be thoroughly discussed in the ensuing chapters. It is, however, important to keep a short historical timetable of chapters 7 and 8 at hand. In Isaiah 7, the historical message concerning the background and the circumstances of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis can be seen, and the arising crisis leads to the prophecies of Isaiah. Historically, the kingship, as in the case of Ahaz, was in principle hereditary and Gruber (1995:591) notes that this notion was commonplace in near eastern communities. King Ahaz was filled with panic and the text in Isaiah 7:2 highlights his overwhelming feelings of fear: 'The heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the tress of the forest shake before the wind.' It was also possible for King Ahaz to lose his kingship if he did not comply with the anti-Assyrian coalition. Because of his fear and indecisiveness, the Syro-Ephraimite coalition planned to remove him from the throne and replace him with Tabeel as it is written in Isaiah 7:6: 'Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the mist of it.' The wordplay on the word Tabeel intrigued me, because if the text of the King James Version is read in comparison to newer versions, Tabeel is written 'Tabeal'. It is here that Herbert (1999:62) gives a worthy interpretation when he explains that there is a deliberate distortion to mean 'good for nothing', whereas the original meaning of a Tabeel means 'God is good'. A very interesting wordplay indeed!

The latter part of Isaiah 7 speaks of two enemies to come, namely Assyria and Egypt. A description of the two enemy nations, according to Hom (2012:15), is metaphorically 'characterized' as wild bees and flies. Hom further explains that the association of wild bees with the Assyrians might be because of the common practice of beekeeping in that land. The reference to Egypt being flies is, according to Roberts (2015:126), because of the abundance of insects along the Nile. All the possible devastations that could threaten the existence of Judah culminates into a threat and a promise in Isaiah 7:21-22. The verses suggest that only a small remnant will survive the judgment and Roberts (2015:127) concludes with the remnant that a few animals will also survive and the surviving remnant will have no shortage of

food to eat. The reciprocation between possible threats, tension and despair, followed by a promise of survival and hope, is not only a recurring theme in the *Denkschrift*, but also in the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 8 begins with a symbolic act where the prophet Isaiah is told to write a couple of words on a tablet¹⁹. An interesting historical element stated by Baker (2013:45), is the fact that official documents in ancient times were not only sealed, but also witnessed usually by religious members whose names would also have been inscribed on the document. Both Irvine (1990:213) and Roberts (2015:130) concur that the signing of witnesses customary served to verify that the contract is genuine and that the information on it is important. Isaiah 8 is also just a further extension of King Ahaz's unwillingness to adhere to the prophet Isaiah's prophecies and Goulder (2004:39) elaborates on this statement when he writes the following: 'By now Ahaz has sent his embassy to Tiglath-Pileser and he ignored the prophet's charge to be quiet, fear not, and trust the promise of Yahweh.' King Ahaz chooses to disregard Isaiah's message of hope and that he should respond with faith in the face of adversity.

Isaiah responds with withdrawing himself from a public role. However, Childs (2001:76) writes that Isaiah did not retreat in despair, but continued to place his hope and faith in Yahweh. He chose to wait until Yahweh no longer 'hides his face' in anger.

The conclusion of the *Denkschrift* is Isaiah chapters 8:23b-9:1-6. To have a better understanding of the historical background of chapter 9, the territorial background in chapter 8:23b provides important information about Judah and the new ruler who is to come. The central theme of Isaiah 8:23b-9:6 is the rise of the new Davidic king that would bring salvation and hope, not only to Judah, but also to Israel. Roberts (2015:146) makes the supposition that even though many scholars have interpreted this text as post-exilic because of its 'messianic' prophecy, it can far easier be explained as a pre-exilic text. There

¹⁹ Baker (2013:46) in his book *Isaiah* gives a detailed description of writing in the ancient Near East, where he elaborates on all the writing equipment of the time.

is no evidence of the rebuilding of a Davidic monarchy in the geographical detail or the royal names within the passage.

However, the oracle for the coronation of Hezekiah fits more into the pre-exilic period. Seitz (1993:85) agrees and states that in 'historical terms, it would be possible to link the defeat of the Syro-Ephraimite coalition with the accession of Hezekiah.' The territories listed in Isaiah 8:23b is described by Roberts (2015:147) as corresponding to the Israelite territories that was invaded during the Syro-Ephraimite war and after that became captured provinces to the Assyrians. Isaiah 9:1-6 is seen by Berges (2012:105) as a 'prophetic song of thanksgiving' and that it unites the previous verse of Chapter 8:23b to the rest of Isaiah 9:1-6 and that the 'zeal of Yahweh will be accomplished.'

What cannot, however, be overlooked is the 'three-level hierarchy' mentioned by Prokhorov (2015:75), that represents Yahweh, who is a sanctuary for some but a snare and stumbling block to many, a somber and muted figure of a prophet under siege and the people of Judah, who must first be plunged into thick darkness before they can see the great light. This stands to proof that the constant sway of tension within the so-called *Denkschrift*, shifts the equilibrium between despair and hope in the traumatic historical background of Judah.

Even though De Jong (2007:19) assumes that the *Denkschrift* can no longer function as a form of text delineation, I would rather concur with Prokhorov (2015:38) that the *Denkschrift* contains 'numerous' and 'significant' links to better understand the traumatic historical climate of Isaiah 7 and 8.

4.5 Summary

The historical and traumatic circumstances in Isaiah 7 and 8 have been studied through the relevant literature components available. These two chapters form the core of the Syro-Ephraimite war and the impending Assyrian threat on the people of Judah. These two chapters form part of the

so-called Isaiah-*Denkschrift*, which as a unit forms part of the first 12 chapters of the book Isaiah.

Both these chapters create not only the historical background for the events of the time, but also give rise to the possibility of trauma in this historical climate. The constant uncertainty, anxiety and despair influence this historical traumatic climate in such a manner that trusts are affected between the prophet Isaiah, King Ahaz and Yahweh. These aspects are determining markers to investigate the possible trauma markers and traumatic experiences within Isaiah 7 and 8. It also pertains the possibility of posttraumatic growth when the historical and social backgrounds are taken into consideration. These possibilities will be addressed in the ensuing chapters to follow.

Through the research of this chapter, it became evident that the historical backdrop and the events of the Syro-Ephraimite war as well as the Assyrian threat set the tone for the social context for the people of Judah. The biblical cross reference reports attest to this when the texts of II Kings 16 and II Chronicles 28 were used in a parallel a comparative context. Within these texts, the shared message is the threat and attack not only on King Ahaz, but also against Jerusalem and Judah as a whole. These aspects of threat, looming war and feelings of despair construct an event for a collective traumatic experience, of which will be investigated, and address in chapters to follow.

A further observation that was made is the function of the so-called Isaiah-*Denkschrift*, in the understanding of the historical and traumatic climate as evident in Isaiah 7 and 8. The unit of Isaiah 6:1-9:6 provides not only historical information of the time, but also adds to the understanding of the traumatic climate as a precursor and indicator of traumatic events and markers not only for chapters 7 and 8, but also for a better understanding of Judah as a pre-exilic community.

With the knowledge gained, the purpose of the ensuing chapters will be to address the pre-exilic period in Isaiah 7 and 8, as trauma literature. A thorough literature and expositional study of Isaiah 7 and 8 will be done to be able to better grasp the meaning of the texts as trauma literature.

Chapter 5

A literature and expositional study of Isaiah 7 and 8

Right, as the world goes, is only a question between equals in power, while the strong do what they wish and the weak suffer what they must.

Thucydides

5.1 Introduction

Trauma is a dominant factor throughout the pre-exilic period in Isaiah 7 and 8. It is surprising then that no book-length treatment of this topic exists. While this study does by no means try to exhaust this issue, the hope is that it would shed light on the topic and stimulate further investigation.

The aim of this chapter is to highlight the main literary expositional studies regarding the Book of Isaiah with particular reference to Isaiah 7 and 8. Various commentaries will comprise the framework for this chapter. An overview of previous and current studies regarding the Book of Isaiah will be given, as it will form the backdrop for study of Isaiah 7 and 8. It is important to understand the research and key elements of Isaiah 7 and 8, because it forms the foundation for the research to build on further. Literary works to better understand the text, but also to identify markers, phrases and metaphors, will be consulted to support the evidence of trauma and traumatic experiences within Isaiah 7 and 8. To aid reading, the English Standard Version will be inserted before every section of the expositional perspective of study.

5.2 Background and introduction

Anyone undertaking a serious study of Isaiah immediately encounters a prophet and a book that is steep in challenges and controversy such as despair, judgment and hope. These judgments and feelings of desolation are laced with messages, not only of misery but also with expectation and hope.

In a way, Isaiah's oracles form the prophetic equilibrium between the ever-conflicting feelings of despair and hope.

In the world of Isaiah war was a defining and ever-present feature and reality, and have been recurrent features of the human condition. Even more so in Isaiah 7 and 8, where the prospect of a looming war and invasion made the prospect of stability and peace, at its best, uncertain and at its worst, dismal.

The Isaiah in chapters 7 and 8 is a man of many parts, namely a prophet, a radical politician and a social reformer. Even the name 'Isaiah' carries a message, not only for the people of the time, but also for us as modern-day scholars in our quest to understand the man, his prophecy and the God that he served. Both Cohen and Westbrook (2008:1) concur that the name, Isaiah, means *Yahweh saves* or *Yahweh is salvation* or *Salvation of Yahweh*²⁰. At first glance, it is a simple straightforward name carrying a metaphor of hope and redemption within the prophetic context. However, it is also resounding a complex message of a suffering prophet prophesying despair, judgment and trauma. Isaiah is perhaps the most famous, most beloved and least understood Old Testament prophet.

The multiple layers and facets of Isaiah can clearly be seen by the many attempts and commentaries that were written by an array of scholars and researchers such as Kaiser (1972), Watts (1985), Wildberger (1991), Childs (2001), Tull (2010) and Roberts (2015) over decades. Schools of thought and interpretation has varied over the years. According to De Jong (2007:5), there was an increase and shift over the last few decades concerning research and scholarly approaches to the study of Isaiah.

A serious undertaking of the study of Isaiah, whether through library research or Internet research, immediately results in the encountering of terms like *Proto-Isaiah*, *Deutero-Isaiah* and *Trito-Isaiah* in almost all commentaries and searches.

²⁰ Cohen and Westbrook (2008:2) state that the Hebrew Bible contains several terms for God namely Yahweh, Jehovah in the English translation and Adonay as the euphemism for Lord.

De Jong (2007:5) postulates that the emphasis on Isaiah as a prophetic personality has changed into more prominence in the Book of Isaiah that thus challenges the tripartite division. Another change that occurred is the focus shift on interpretation. Becker (1997:44-68) also agrees and writes that interpretation should focus on the book as a whole and not on the three-different separate tripartite divisions. Clements (1985:98) describes the Book of Isaiah as having 'one of the most complex literary structures of the entire Old Testament.' Even though there are different scholarly debates and inputs about Isaiah, Sweeney (2008:78) writes that it is ironic that both the fragmentation of the book of Isaiah into the tripartite, as well as the proposed basis for an integrative study for the book, already appeared in Duhm's groundbreaking work published in 1892. The focus shifted on two levels, firstly according to De Jong (2007:5) and Berges (2012:2), who concurs that the focus is on the book as a unity and secondly, the division into the tripartite sections was being challenged.

History matters, and according to Kim (2008:118), this does not only mean history in terms of the composition of the book of Isaiah, but history is also important because it gives us an idea of all the scholars who have struggled with the book and the main character, Isaiah. For decades, scholars such as Duhm (1914), Budde (1928), Fohrer (1962-1964, 1972), Westermann (1969), Kaiser (1972), Wildberger (1972), Melugin (1976), Vermeylen (1977-1979), Clements (1980), Sweeney (1988), Seitz (1993) and many more tried to understand and learn about Isaiah.

Each new research season, created new scholarly insights and different academic viewpoints. A study done by Ackroyd in (1978:47), postulated his argument that the structure of Isaiah 1-12, validated the authority of the prophet and therefore presented him, Isaiah, to be presented to the final redactors of the book. What Ackroyd (1978:47) herewith implies is that the authentication of the prophetic oracle lies not in its original situation, but 'in the continuing process by which prophetic word and receptive hearing interact.' Sweeney (2007:81) further elaborates that in the late 1970s and early 1980s

the influential works of Childs and Clements focused their scholarly interests on the 'interrelationships of the major components of Isaiah'. Brueggemann, in 1984, moved away from Childs and Clements' predominantly literary approach to a more social dynamic study. Sweeney (2008:82)²¹ writes that Brueggemann offers a new understanding on the creative role of the community and what this new role will play in the formulation of the text.

Blum, as discussed in Sweeney (2008:82), states in 1996 that the core material of Isaiah 1-39 can be found in Isaiah 1-11 and he refers to it as the 'Testament of Isaiah'. Kim (2008:121) writes that Becker in 1997 does not agree with Blum when he states that 'Isaiah 6-8 forms the literary core', with its redactional addition in chapter 7, where Becker makes the innovative claim that Isaiah was originally a 'prophet of salvation'.

Both De Jong (2007:53) and Kim (2008:120) concur that Barthel (1997) took a more traditional approach, and Kim further elaborates that Barthel employed both a synchronic as well as some diachronic analyses on the composition of the book Isaiah.²² Barthel as explained by Kim (2008:121), proposes that chapter 7 was originally intended to convey the message of warning against the Judean dynasty, but subsequently became reinterpreted as a response to changing settings and situations. If Barthel's proposition is founded, then the dualistic prophetic meaning of Isaiah's message can be interpreted as a message of despair within the warning continuum but also of hope within the changing milieu, and with this I can concur. Another viewpoint given by Blenkinsopp (2000:84) is a commentary, stating the current issue from a redactional stage, as well as a viewpoint on the historical components. For this he presents two profiles, 'the Isaiah of the sayings', with the perception of judgment and the Isaiah of the 'narrative', with a 'pro-governing ideology'. In concurrence with Blenkinsopp, Clements (2002:93) addresses the literary

²¹ Both the works of Sweeney and Kim can be found in Hauser (2008: 78-118) *Resent research on the major Prophets*, edited by Hauser, A.J. in 2008.

²² The work of Bartel, J. (1997) that is referred to, is his book *Prophetenwort und Geschichte* with the main focus on Isaiah 6-8.

intricacies of the similar and divergent features and argues that the message focused on divine judgment to the people of Judah.

More recently the works of Blenkinsopp (2000), Childs (2001), Tull (2010), De Jong (2007), Berges (2012) and Prokhorov (2015) gave new perspective on the conundrum of the book of Isaiah. As an example, and a note of interest, is De Jong's (2007:50) work where he treats the book of Isaiah as a comparative perspective within the Assyrian period. This is done firstly to highlight the relation between prophecies and historical circumstances in chapter 4, secondly, the function of the prophets in chapter 5 and lastly, the literary development of prophecy in chapter 6.

The recent study of Prokhorov (2015:23) aims its focus on the *Denkschrift*, a terminology coined by Budde in 1928. Prokhorov (2015:23), however, states that the function of this unit of Isaiah 6:1-9:6, is that it forms a vital compositional core in chapters 1-12 because of the concentrically alignment thereof. He further writes that 'the layers within the *Denkschrift* ought to be reconsidered.' These layers will be of importance, especially in chapters 7 and 8 of this study in the identification of the trauma markers within the text.

Berges (2012:3) rightly states that 'the book of Isaiah is too disparate to be regarded as unified, and too unified to be regarded as disparate.' The book of Isaiah is a challenge, whether it is seen as a three-book interpretation or a one-book study.

5.3 An expositional perspective on Isaiah 7

5.3.1 Literary context of Isaiah 7

Every scholar who has ever worked with the text in Isaiah 7 will attest that it is an extremely difficult chapter, for the text is not only multilayered, as observed by Childs (2001:63), but also the third-person narration is used. Chapter 7

falls within the structural context of the so-called Isaiah-*Denkschrift*, which forms part of Isaiah 1-12.

Chapter 7 continues the prose narrative sequence that began with chapter 6. In chapter 7, the themes, phrases and metaphors in chapter 6 are developed further confirming Yahweh's message of the destruction of Judah. Moreover, within the message of destruction there is an underlining delineation of despair and hope. Prokhorov (2015:112) draws the conclusion that in both cases Yahweh's destruction emulates despair and hope as the experience is framed as 'an episode, a prelude to a profounder motif' concerning the ruling kingdom and the Judean community.

The encounter between Isaiah and King Ahaz in chapter 7 is told in the third person (Isaiah 7:3: 'Then the Lord said to Isaiah...'). Chapter 7, according to Kaiser (1972:138-139), is 'clearly marked off from chapter 6' by the new beginning in chapter 7 and with the distinct transition from a first-person to a third-person. Both chapters 6 and 8 are presented as first-person encounters, as if being told by the prophet Isaiah himself. Tull (2010:157) writes that narratives are highly unusual in the book of Isaiah and when it is found, it is usually third-person encounters, as it is also sketched out in chapters 20 and 36-39. Chapter 7 is a complicated discourse and Berges (2012:89) states that it is constructed of various literary genres such as the narrative, oracle and address. These genres collectively form together a single unit contributing to the feelings of despair and hope.

The complexity of chapter 7 can only be comprehended against the backdrop of the political setting and the ensuing prophecy of Isaiah. This will entail the role players, the political crisis and the social implications. The role of Isaiah as a prophet and his prophecy are at times directly and at other times, subtly entwined throughout these aspects. As already stated in a previous chapter and elaborated on in a following chapter, prophecy in chapter 7 is set against politics during the reign of Uzziah's grandson Ahaz. The dating of Isaiah 7 is a

problematic challenge for many scholars, and Blenkinsopp (2000:231)²³ raises the question if one should not look at the parallelism between the encounters that Isaiah had with Ahaz and that of King Hezekiah, with specific reference to the siege of Jerusalem in 701 BCE. The reason he proposes this parallel viewpoint is because the succeeding passage of Isaiah 18-25 fits the disastrous situation in Judah after the invasion of the Assyrian army in 701 BCE. This assumption is also based on the fact that there are other indications of the threats of an Assyrian invasion visible in chapters 1-12 it points to events of 703-701 BCE, rendering a perspective of past events. If the parallelism between the two passages is plausible, it can explain some puzzling features in chapter 7:1-10 such as the name of Isaiah's son *Shear-jashub* that can also be reinterpreted in chapters 10:20-22 and 11: 11-16.

5.3.2 Structure and delineation of Isaiah 7

Isaiah 7 poses a challenge to anyone who reads it. Few other scriptures are as complex and ambiguous than this one. The chapter creates an interpretive tangle with imagery, metaphors and prophetic utterance. There are as many opinions as there are challenges regarding the form of Isaiah 7. Structurally, the unit can be divided into several sections. Wildberger (1991:281) postulates that there is no general consensus about where the section ends, but he subdivides chapter 7 as follows; verses 1-17 and verses 18-25. Kaiser (1972:83) is of the opinion that verses 10-17, based on their content, belongs to the preceding verses but that verse 10 should be dated in terms of time and locale, against the preceding verses. Wildberger (1991:281) disagrees with Kaiser arguing that sign that was given is clearly connected to the message delivered to King Ahaz in verses 4-9 and therefore Wildberger suggests that section 1-17 should be considered as a unit in regards to its place and time. However, if the text is studied, it is clear that there is a definite break in thought after verse 9. In verses 1-9 Isaiah is commissioned to confront Ahaz with the well-known petition 'and say to him' in verse 4. Within verses 1-9,

²³ Blenkinsopp (2000:231-232) further elaborates on Isaiah's political role, a subject matter that would be addressed in the ensuing chapter of this study.

verses 4-9 as a corpus, can be seen within the narrative as an oracle of salvation and hope.

Earlier scholars such as Kaiser (1972:87) divides Isaiah 7 into three distinct sections, verses 1-9, 10-17 and 18-25, with the first section to be divided into verses 1-2, which is the account for the political situation, and verses 3-6 as the warning given to Ahaz by Isaiah as a message from Yahweh. Verses 7-9 are the culmination of this warning to Ahaz. It is of interest to note that Seitz (1993:75) divides Isaiah 7 only into two divisions, namely verses 1-9 and verses 10-25. The reason being is that his main focus is on the Immanuel perspective.

An interpretive view held by Watts (1985:83) is to demarcate Isaiah 7 into the following episodes; verses 1-9, 10-16 and 17-25 and explains that following the narrative account in verses 1-12, the ensuing verses are presented in episodes with interwoven motifs such as 'sons' and 'signs'. Watts (1985:86) divides this chapter further into different scenes: 'Keep calm and steady' (3-9), 'The sign' (10-16) and 'Yahweh is bringing critical times—Assyrian Era' (17-25).

Within the section of chapter 7:1-17, Blenkinsopp (2000:232) writes that inside the narrative of verses 1-17, there is an unmistakable break after verse 9 subdividing verses 1-17 into two further compositions, namely 7:3-9 and 7:10-17. De Jong (2007:59) also attests to this division and he postulates that the composition of verses 1-17 consists of two scenes, namely verses 1-9 and 10-17. Both these divisions contain at the center an oracle specifically addressed to Ahaz.

Newer commentaries have almost similar demarcations and divisions than the earlier works of scholars in the 20th century. A few new insights are given, but the foundation for the work stays the same. According to Childs (2001:62), Isaiah 7 can easily be divided into three distinct already known units, namely: verses 1-2, 3-17 and 18-25. Regarding the last section of verses 18-25,

Childs (2001:63)²⁴ construes there are four independent 'eschatological sayings' each starting with 'in that day', which seems to help to interpretation of the prophetic oracles to be found in verses 1-17 of the chapter. Childs (2001:63) further postulates that he would prefer to group verses 3-17 together as a unit, because verse 10 is the offering of a sign and that develops out of verses 3-9 that also forms a unit.

An interesting and new delineation is found in the commentary work of McKenna (2004:77) where he refers to Isaiah 7, 8 and 9 as the 'signs of the children' and he demarcates Isaiah 7:1-12 as 'Child of salvation', verses 13-25 as 'Child suffering', Isaiah 8:1-10 as 'Child of judgment', verses 11-22 as 'Child of faith' and Isaiah 9:1-7 as 'Child of hope'.

The assessment done by Roberts (2015:107) on Isaiah 7 and 8 also makes an episodically reference to the children of Isaiah as scene markers in his treatment of the text where he would use their names in the verse delineation. Roberts (2015:117) and Tull (2010:158) divide the chapters as follows: Isaiah 7:1-9 'Take heed, be quiet, do not fear', Isaiah 7:10-17 'Ask a sign of the Lord your God' and Isaiah 7:18-25 'On that day'. I concur with both of them and for this study and chapter, I will base my exposition on their demarcations as well as the earlier work of Kaiser in regards to the delineation of verses 1-2, 3-6 and 7-9. The reason being that with the combination of the demarcation of the abovementioned scholars' work, a better more in-depth exposition of the text can be provided to better understand the text, and the trauma markers that are evident within the text.

5.3.3 Exposition of Isaiah 7:1-9

Isaiah sent to King Ahaz

1 In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it.

²⁴ Childs (2001:63) also states that because of the multi-layering of the text, cross-referencing should also be done.

2 When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim", the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

3 And the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field.

4 And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah.

5 Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying,

6 "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it,"

7 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ' "It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass.

8 For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered from being a people.

9 And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.' "

The chapter starts with 'In the days of Ahaz ...' as an indication of the period and time of this historical setting in which the Syro-Ephraimite invasion would take place. Scholars such as Blenkinsopp (2000:227) dates this period as 734 BCE and Irvine concur with a bit wider scope of 734-732 BCE as the time frame for the unfolding events. Wildberger (1991:292) also comments, 'we are in the fortunate position of being able to date a prophetic message very precisely, with great confidence. Verse 1, taken from the second book of Kings 16:5, comes from the royal records located in the Jerusalem palace.'

In 2 Kings 15:37 it is reported that pressure from Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Israel upon Judah had begun while Jotham was still alive. It can therefore be assumed that Ahaz faced the threat of this confrontation with his northern neighbours at the very beginning of his reign. Kaiser (1983:145) concurs with Wildberger when he states:

The narrative presupposes that its audience has some knowledge of the Syro-Ephraimite war as it is depicted, with extraordinary brevity, in II Kings 16:5-9.

The duplication of events is only applicable to verse 1. Beyond that verse, regarding II Kings 16:5-9, the accounts on the ensuing event differ vastly. In the Kings account Isaiah is not mentioned. In the reign of the Judean King Ahaz, Rezin, the king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah, attacked Jerusalem. Pekah was the king of (north) Israel. Verse 1 set the opening scene for the planned attack on Jerusalem, but the two enemies were unable to conquer the city.

<p>II Kings 16:5</p> <p>Then came up King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah Son of Remaliah of Israel to wage war on Jerusalem; they besieged Ahaz but could not prevail over him</p>	<p>Isaiah 7:1</p> <p>In the days of Ahaz son of Jotham son of Uzziah, king of Judah came up King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah Son of Remaliah of Israel to Jerusalem to attack it, but could not mount an attack against it.</p>
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Verse 2 indicates that it is Aram, not Israel that was the driving force behind the action against Jerusalem. Therefore, when one looks at verse 2 it reads, ‘When the house of David was told, “Syria is in league with Ephraim,” the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind’, it becomes clear that this was the moment that they were filled with fear. Here is a clear marker within the text that predicates the commencement of trauma within this traumatic event. The metaphor exacerbates the fear by comparing the looming threat to a wind or storm that would shook the foundation of the house of Ahaz and most probably the people of Judah. This futile sense of dismay seized the house of David leaving them fearful and in despair. Wildberger (1991:294) explains that Ahaz, at the beginning of his reign, must have been young, and with the threat of a possible war, must certainly have been depending upon the advice of the people in his palace and even of his family members. One can therefore

assume that 'the heart of Ahaz' in verse 2 refers specifically to him and because he represents his house as the leader, this fear is also embedded in the house of David. The verse also demonstrates a simile where the shaking hearts are compared to that of trees in a forest that shook before the wind. The house of David and Ahaz as the head of the house and king is compared to a forest. In a situation like this, an inner composure and an outward steadfastness would resemble the dignity and qualities, which is expected of a Davidic king. But Ahaz does not seem able to measure up to such a demeanor. Verses 1-2 highlight the political and difficult situation King Ahaz finds himself in.

Verse 3 begins with 'And the Lord said to Isaiah ...' After Ahaz was filled with fear, at that time, Isaiah is assigned the task of going up to confront Ahaz. Isaiah is also told to take with him his son *Shear-jashub* – 'a remnant will return'. Tull (2010:161) writes the following: 'Though the significance of the boy's presence at that moment is left to the imagination, in the context of the book of Isaiah, he introduces a theological theme that has been lurking already (1:9, 4:2; 6:13), but will become quite prominent in the chapters that follow.' In this lies the promise of a 'remnant' that will return, which in its very survival still carries forward the seed of a possible future. Blenkinsopp (2000:231) further postulates that within the present framework of the text, the name clearly carries a 'good omen' but only if King Ahaz holds onto his faith in Yahweh, can a major devastation like deportation be averted. In this regard, despair and anxiety can be overcome with faith and hope. The latter part of the name *jashub* implies a return to Yahweh and embodies a metaphor of 'returning from battle' and 'survival in war'. Roberts (2015:110) gives an interesting interpretation when he states that the presence of *Shear-jashub* and the symbolic meaning of his name, at the meeting between Isaiah and King Ahaz, were intended to underline Isaiah's message of salvation and hope. The significance of the metaphorical implication of the name *Shear-jashub* and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, in chapter 8, will be thoroughly discussed as trauma elements in a chapter dedicated thereto.

Isaiah is to meet Ahaz at 'the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway, to the Fuller's field.' It is not completely clear why the meeting should take place where Ahaz is inspecting the waterworks. Blenkinsopp (2000:231) gives an explanation that it could be that Isaiah was not sent to the palace so that he would not attract attention. Wildberger (1991:295) makes an interesting observation when he writes that 'one can conclude from the "go out to" that it refers to a particular location which is outside the city walls. In addition to this, this is the only time that we find out the name of a street within or near ancient Jerusalem.' It must have been a well-known place.

Verse 4 starts with 'and say to him', and indicates the actual oracle between Isaiah and King Ahaz as a direct message from Yahweh to Ahaz. This first message to Ahaz is full of reassurance, starting with four imperatives: 'Be careful', 'be quiet', 'do not fear' and 'do not let your heart be faint'. De Jong (2007:59) states that the 'oracle of "do not fear" is a frequent reassurance given in situations of threat and especially of impending conflict.' Roberts (2015:110) concurs with De Jong but further postulates that 'be quiet', 'do not fear' and 'do not let your heart be faint', can be seen as 'holy war language' because of the reference that can also be found in Deuteronomy 20:3 that includes the same wording 'be faint' and 'to stand in awe'. The prophet encourages the king in a threatening situation not to fear, which can be inferred from the oracle itself. This is the first but not the last time that Isaiah will involve himself in the political situation. Isaiah uses a demeaning metaphor for the two aggressors as 'two smoldering stumps of firebrands'. The metaphor is an outstanding example of just the right choice of words in Isaiah's use of metaphorical imagery. Tull (2010:161) postulates that anger is often described in terms of fire; here Isaiah compares the anger or rage of the two kings to two smoldering stumps that have already been put out. They are ineffective. Wildberger (1991:295)²⁵ concurs that the stumps are only smoking a bit, but they still need to be treated with care. De Jong (2007:59)²⁶ states

²⁵ It should be noted that Wildberger (1991:295) explains that 'the word refers to a log which has been pulled out of the fire.'

²⁶ In verse 7:4d De Jong (2007:59) expands on the identity of the two stumps.

that in verse 4b the aggressors, described as the two smoldering stumps, are explicitly identified as Rezin and Aram, son of Remaliah.

Verse 5: It is only when one reads the beginning of verse 5, 'Because ...' that one discovers the plans of the opponents in the war against Ahaz. The conjunction 'because' indicates a turning point in the narrative and provides the reason for the threat. The naming of 'Ephraim and the son of Ramaliah' puts the Northern Kingdom on the same level as Aram. Wildberger (1991:300) explains that Isaiah does not mention Pekah here by name but only by the designation of 'the son of Ramaliah' and the reason is to express disdain. Roberts (2015:110) also argues that even though King Ahaz and his court were terrified at the plans of Aram and Israel, Isaiah did not feel threatened and by Rezin, king of Aram or by the king of Israel, whose name he treated as unworthy to mention. The plans of Aram and Israel were clear, they wanted to depose of Ahaz and replace him with someone they could work with.

Verse 6 firstly indicates Aram and Israel's plan to go against Judah, to cut her off and to enthrone a new king. The plan, according to Roberts (2015:111), entailed a surprise attack on Jerusalem and then to capture the city. Once the city was besieged, the coalition hoped that Judah would succumb to a new king. This new king is to be the 'son of Tabeel' and this name reference is not mentioned elsewhere, making his identity unclear. Kaiser (1972:146)²⁷ remarks that he is not likely to be Judean royalty or even Judean. My interest on the wordplay on the name 'Tabeel' was addressed in a previous chapter. Verses 3-6 can be seen as Yahweh's instruction to Isaiah for King Ahaz to heed His warning.

Verse 7: In verse 7 the actual prediction follows, 'therefore thus says the Lord God; it shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass'. 'Therefore' indicates in this instance that Yahweh will not allow this to succeed, namely the evil, which Aram had planned, and Yahweh reassures King Ahaz. As soon as the aggressor's plans are described, Isaiah is to deliver the prophecy of hope in

²⁷ According to Kaiser (1972:146), an attempt to put mixed blood on the throne was enough cause for Yahweh to intervene.

Yahweh's name and the reason why he should not fear. According to Tull (2010:163) the message of hope is a 'four-word poem: "it will not stand, and it shall not come to pass"'. Thus, it seems that Isaiah has used a formulation commonly found in wisdom literature and Wildberger (1991:300)²⁸ writes 'it is not the plans of human beings, but rather the plan of Yahweh.' A similar wisdom reference can be found in Proverbs 19:21 and Job 8:15.

Verse 8-9: Based on what is said in verse 7, verse 8 is introduced with 'for' as a preposition indicating what is going to happen and to give reasons why the plan of the enemies will not come to pass. The names of the enemies are pertinently mentioned as Damascus as the head of Aram and the head of Damascus as Rezin.

At this point the message is clear, it is not just the enemy leaders, but also, their capital cities, Damascus and Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, that are mentioned. One can only come to one conclusion, and that is that they do not have the same honour in Yahweh's eyes as the city of Jerusalem because it is already stated in verse 7, 'it shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass.' The second part of verse 8 is most puzzling. Herbert (1999:62) writes the following: 'Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered, no longer a people'. This is neither factually correct, nor relevant to the situation confronting Ahaz, and destroys the rhythm of the oracle. Wildberger and Tull both struggle with this elliptical gloss. Tull (2010:163) states that the northern kingdom would be destroyed within a dozen years and Wildberger (1991:301)²⁹ rightfully asked the following question, 'Is this a prediction which was never fulfilled?' A possible answer could be that this part of verse 8 originally followed the first half of verse 9. Through the literature and commentaries research, I have noticed that the unusual structure of verses 8-9, are rarely discussed in detail as is the case with the rest of the text, rendering these two verses difficult to understand. However, both the work of Prokhorov and Roberts give a comprehensible clarification of

²⁸ Wildberger (1991:300) explains that in a similar context, he makes the same observation in Isaiah 14:24 using as it shall be, it shall stand.

²⁹ It should be noted that Wildberger (1991:303) states that sixty-five years, calculated from the time of the Syro-Ephraimite war, goes beyond the time when Israel came to its end.

these two verses. Prokhorov (2015:88) proposes that the focus in verses 8-9 is solely on Ephraim, and that the parallel mentioning of Syria or the alliance Syria has with Ephraim, is not the main aspect of the verse. The mentioning of Damascus in verse 8 then becomes a secondary feature within verses 8-9. Roberts (2015:111) makes almost the same assumption as Prokhorov, but further clarifies the formulation that verse 8b announces a clear impending judgment on Ephraim, and that the mentioning of Damascus in verse 8 has relevance to verse 1 and is a later glossarial addition to the text. I am particularly interested in a supposition that Roberts (2015:112) makes regarding verse 8b in the text. This verse refers to 'within sixty-five years' and he states that this period is too long to give Ahaz within the present context, any reassurance of hope. The point of interest that Roberts (2015:112) makes is that the time limits involved with the succeeding oracles are much shorter in time frame, particularly when one looks at the involvement of the other children whom also have symbolic names.

Roberts (2015:111) further postulates that if verse 8b is omitted, the only clear announcement of judgment of Judah's enemies is to be found in the *Shear-jashub* oracle, which forms a parallel with the *Immanuel* oracle in Isaiah 7:17 and the *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* oracle in Isaiah 8:4. Both the other two name-oracles have clear judgments on Judah's imposing enemies of Aram and Israel. These aspects are important for this study, as it pertains within the names, features of despair and hope that will be discussed in ensuing chapters.

Tull (2010:163) also argues that the logic of the rest of verses 8-9 implies the following: 'Rezin may happen to be heading up Damascus and Aram, and the son of Remaliah may happen to be in charge of Samaria and Ephraim, but the divinely appointed head of Judah and Jerusalem is the house of David.' The logical conclusion to the sequence in verses 8-9 would be a message of salvation but instead it is a negative-conditional clause in verse 9b. Kaiser (1983:148) disagrees and writes that Isaiah 7:3-9 can be seen as an oracle of salvation, because it is a format commonly used when prophetic messages are delivered to kings. The style of the oracle of salvation is interrupted by

verse 9. The oracle of salvation of Isaiah, 'If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all' becomes a message of admonition or warning. Barton (2003:60) also believes that it is unlikely that verse 9b belonged to the original oracle, because verse 9b introduces a condition of faith addressed to a plural subject and it reformulates the Davidic covenant by changing the promise into a negative circumstance. Prokhorov (2015:89) states that this utterance of Isaiah to King Ahaz has an element of trust embedded in it and that this remark solely place the prophet, and not king Ahaz, on Yahweh's side. In this way, it gives a new twist to the oracle to Ahaz. The dualistic prophecy of this verse, contrasting between hope and salvation and despair and fear, raises the question: what would make Ahaz believe? I am of the opinion, based on the context, it is the promise made to the house of David, which forms part of the prophetic message and the foundation of faith.

5.3.4 The exposition of Isaiah 7:10-17

Ask a sign

10 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz,

11 "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven."

12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test."

13 And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?"

14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

15 He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.

16 For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.

17 The LORD will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah – the king of Assyria."

Verses 10-17 in content, belongs to the preceding passage of verses 1-9.

Verse 10 relates a stronger exchange between Yahweh and Ahaz, 'Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz.' The word 'again' creates a turning point in the narrative emphasising that once more Yahweh spoke to Ahaz. Irvine (1991:159) makes

the supposition that in verse 10, Yahweh speaks directly to King Ahaz and that is different from the previous verses where Yahweh spoke through the prophet Isaiah to the king. Now Ahaz is invited to ask for a sign, no matter how big. Berges (2012:94) also states as Irvine (1990:159) did that 'it is striking that Yahweh addresses Ahaz directly, which on the one hand relieves Isaiah, and on the other, puts the burden on the king.' Roberts (2015:117) responds by stating that a failure on the part of King Ahaz to answer in faith would place the stability of the dynasty in jeopardy.

In other words, if Ahaz rejects Yahweh's offer of a sign, he not only implicates his own faithlessness but he also creates a potential traumatic milieu for himself and the people of Judah.

Verse 11 holds an invitation from Yahweh to King Ahaz to request a sign from Him. Isaiah even goes, as far as to give Ahaz the chance to choose whatever type of sign should be given. The contrast between 'deep as Sheol (underworld) or high as heaven' implies and underlines the generosity of Yahweh. Hayes and Irvine (1987:131) explain that the sign that is offered to King Ahaz is not intended to convey a prediction but rather to confirm the truth of the divine promise given in verses 7-9a. Hereto, Sweeney (1996:153) agrees by stating that the sign request proposed to King Ahaz is a reassurance already given in the previous verses of 3-9. According to Watts (1985:96), a prophet frequently offers a sign to a king in so far that they might know that Yahweh will fulfill the promise He made. The sign needs not be a miracle, but is still something unusual as the scope stretches from the sea to the heaven. Kaiser (1972:98) underlines the magnitude of the sign by stating that with this offer given to King Ahaz, Isaiah steps aside and Yahweh comes to the forefront.

Verse 12: The beginning of verse 12 shows yet another turning point in the narrative with the use of the conjunction 'but' which indicate the communication patterns between the participants in the narrative. According to verse 12, Ahaz is not willing to accept the offer and Prokhorov (2015:89) alludes that it seems as if King Ahaz responds here out of general reverence

and not out of faith. Acceptance of a sign in ancient times was seen as the onset of events to come and the implication is that witnessing such a sign will strengthen the king's resolve by tradition. The narrative, however, makes it clear that Ahaz's refusal is unjustified even though, according to the letter of the law, it was correct. Both Kaiser (1972:99) and Roberts (2015:118) presume that the king acts here as a discerning political strategist, who claims that his decision reflects the views of the royal court. Wildberger (1991:305) remarks that even though theologically King Ahaz might have given the right answer, within his restitute are embedded a lack of courage and faith. To elaborate on Ahaz's lack of faith Goldingay (2015:34) writes that there might be a difference between people who want to believe and those who do not want to believe. Those who want to believe will gladly admit so but in the case of Ahaz, it is clear that he does not want to believe because he is offering excuses not to do so.

At that time a sign was part of a prophecy and was given by Yahweh on numerous occasions to his people. Blenkinsopp (2000:232) explains that a sign could be phenomenal and random as in Isaiah 38:7-8, or it could be unusual but clearly symbolic as in Isaiah 20:3. Signs in itself could also have personal value, whereas place-names may also have sign value, which could either be hopeful or threatening such as the names of Isaiah's children. Tull (2010:164)³⁰ elaborates by giving further examples of signs given in biblical times such as can be read in 'Noah (Gen 9:12), to Abraham (Gen 17:11), to Moses (Ex 4:8-17), to Eli (1 Sam 2:34) and to Saul (1 Sam 10:7-9)'.

Verse 13: The brevity of the account reflected in the previous verses do not give a clear reason for the sharp reply from Isaiah in verse 13. It is almost as if Isaiah is irritated with Ahaz when he replies: 'Hear then house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?' This frustration of the prophet Isaiah can be detected when a moment before he spoke of Yahweh as 'our God' and now in this verse he speaks of 'my God'. The text further distinguishes between two Judean political groups at which the

³⁰ Tull (2010:164) writes: 'In all fairness, God did not typically invite people to ask for signs, signs were simply issued.'

message is aimed, the house of David on the one hand, and Ahaz, in his personal capacity, on the other. Berges (2012:96) writes that 'the accusation in 7:13 indicates that it is not about his personal destiny as such, but rather about the continuity of the Davidic dynasty.' Barton (2003:62) concurs with Berges stating that even though there is criticism against the ruling parties in Jerusalem, a direct judgment against the Davidic house cannot be found. Ahaz's refusal of a sign is equal to a negative decision against the faith demanded in verse 7b.

Roberts (2015:118) makes an interesting assumption that the shift from 'our' to 'my' Isaiah deliberately excludes the Davidic house from the relationship with Yahweh, because this relationship was based on faith and because they showed a lack of faith, they forfeited this intimacy with Yahweh.

Verse 14: Many debates have been given and a lot of controversy has been written about the interpretation of verse 14. 'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.' The question that many have asked is if the sign is an indication of despair or hope? The use of the word 'therefore', itself should not be seen as an argument to introduce a threat. But, in fact, according to Wildberger (1991:307) no one would arrive at any other conclusion than that it is a message of judgment, according to Wildberger (1991:307), but De Jong (2007:60) has a different viewpoint:

It can be equally be explained from the suggestion that an original oracle of salvation was secondarily reworked into a context of threat but the birth oracle concerning Immanuel is a straightforward announcement of salvation.

I am, however, of the opinion that this oracle has a layered dimension consequence. It balances on the edge of salvation if the role players, namely Ahaz, the house of David and the people of Judah listen to Isaiah's prophecy and have faith in Yahweh. If not, despair is a result.

The following verses of prophecy on the name Immanuel continually tilt the equilibrium between hope and despair. Tull (2010:165) gives a different perspective on the name 'Immanuel – With us is God'. The best resonance, according to Tull, is in relation to Psalm 46 where Isaiah is encouraging Ahaz: 'God is our strength and refuse'. The Psalm affirms that 'we will not fear' even if mountains shake and tremble. Here Tull (2010:165) makes an interesting comparison between the trembling of the mountains and Ahaz that is shaking of fear. Within the sign, is embedded the birth announcement. In this verse, there are three consecutive verbs: 'with child', 'bear a son' and 'name him'. De Jong (2007:61) explains that name giving is always directed to the recipient of the oracle and in this narrative it is Ahaz. It can also be understood that the name 'Immanuel' refers to the imminent rescue from the enemies and reinforces the pressure to resist the anti-Assyrian coalition and the promise of salvation by Yahweh. The birth announcement is a direct announcement of salvation for Ahaz but it also pertains a word of judgment in reaction to Ahaz's disbelief.

Budde (1928:137) sees the meaning of the Immanuel saying as the most important aspect in the rejection of Ahaz. The meaning could be twofold: It could either encourage the king or it could be an announcement of his demise. Budde (1927:137) believes it means the announcement of despair and gives the following arguments: the prophet accuses Ahaz of exhausting Yahweh's patience (verse 13), the Immanuel sign connotes a threat (verse 14) and the diet of the child 'curds and honey' symbolises an end to all culture in the land (verse 15).

The 'virgin's' identity is not given and many different interpretations are given to identify the mother. The suggestions are as many as the opinions regarding her identity: She is King Ahaz's wife, pregnant with Hezekiah, who will be born 741 BCE or she is Isaiah's wife and that her identity is unknown, because she is not that important to the narrative. Kaiser (1972:102) is of the opinion that it does not refer to King Hezekiah, because chronologically it does not make sense, the reason being that he ascended the throne when he was 26 years old and in 733 BCE he was already a young boy. However it might be

interpreted, Tull (2010:166) makes the summation that what Isaiah makes clear in the oracle is not the woman's identity, or that of her child, but this woman who had everything to fear from the prospect of war, still had the confidence to name her child 'Immanuel'. This courage will be a sign for Ahaz. This sign will have a binary meaning; a sign of hope that Jerusalem will be delivered and a sign of despair enlightening his lack of faith.

Verse 15 continues with even more ambiguity within the narrative: 'He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse evil and choose the good.' Again, there is an underlying prophetic message of hope and despair in as such as if 'honey' and 'curd' denote a blessing or a curse, and Motyer (1993:86) implies that it means a 'monotonous diet of hard times.' Roberts (2015:119) writes that verse 15 defines the meaning to choose 'good' as well as the time frame that it refers to. The time limit and time frame is connected to the time of childhood development especially when a child can choose between foods and begin to eat by itself. Roberts (2015:119) suggests that when the child starts to eat food, the danger from the northern kingdom and the allies from Aram will be in the past. De Jong (2007:60) remarks on the ambiguity of this verse: 'By contrast, 7:15 is a later *relecture* of the oracle that focuses on the figure of Immanuel himself rather than on the event of which he is the portent.' The reference to 'curds' and 'honey' is clearly understood as describing abundance in the time of salvation, especially if the reference in Exodus 3:8, 17 is considered. The counter side of abundance is found later in verse 22 when 'curds' and 'honey' are eaten because war has disrupted the food production. Roberts (2015:120) comes to a different conclusion than De Jong (2007:60) when he states that the mentioning of these foods, 'curds' and 'honey', is no validation that there would be a food scarcity, because the reference in Isaiah 7:22 suggests that the surviving remnant will have enough to eat and therefore, on the surface, this oracle should appear as positive. I would concur that it should on the surface be seen as an oracle of hope and the possibility for posttraumatic growth for King Ahaz and the people if they adhere to this oracle.

Verse 16: 'For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.' There is no doubt that Isaiah himself is speaking in this verse. However, what is difficult to determine in this verse is exactly how long Isaiah anticipated it would take for the child to 'refuse evil' and 'choose good'. One would assume that is in the general sense of the word when a child would be able to make choices in his own environment. According to Roberts (2015:119), verse 16 implies that by the time the child is able to make a distinction between 'good' and 'bad', the territory of the two kings whom the Judean court feared would be deserted and left desolate. Wildberger (1991:315)³¹ states that Isaiah does not want to mention a specific point in time but that one could presume that this refers to a banishment, because in 732 BCE Damascus fell and did not rise again. Whereas Israel could come away from this incident only lightly scathed, a large portion of its territory fell to the Assyrians in 732 and the population was quite reduced in their numbers. Irvine (1990:166) perceives verse 16 as extended clauses of the preceding verses, and that it presents a two-part prophetic announcement about future political developments of the two enemy kings, when he predicts the demise of Syria and Israel. With this prediction Isaiah implies the failure of their plot against the house of David and the Judean court. The second part of the verse, according to Irvine (1990:167), entails the announcement to King Ahaz that Yahweh will restore the northern kingdom to the Davidic control again.

Verse 17: The narrative develops further in verse 17 when Isaiah tells the King that Yahweh will bring on him, his people and his house, 'such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah – the king of Assyria.' Assyria, the very nation whom King Ahaz wants to form an alliance with, according to Beyer (2013:57), becomes Judah's biggest adversary. To concur with this Prokhorov (2015:91) adds that Ephraim's separation from Judah is presented as evil and it equals the invasion from the Assyrians. The threat that the Assyrians pose for the people of Judah is textually explained by Hom (2012:24) as two elements that reinforces one another, where verse 17a

³¹ Wildberger (1991:315) mentions that 'one might compare Deuteronomy 1:39 at this point.' For this study it will just be stated and not discussed.

refers to devastating events that contributes to a consequential threat in the latter part of verse 17b. These traumatic looming circumstances create a dais for the experiencing of traumatic experiences.

In another interesting discussion on verse 17, Watts (1985:106) writes that the verse contains three important elements that can be summed up as follows: in the first sense, the onus is on Yahweh and not on King Ahaz who is part of Yahweh's plans to suppress Aram and Israel. The second event is of importance to the young king, for his people, the people of Judah and Jerusalem who have suffered greatly in the Syro-Ephraimite war and now must experience a new set of trauma in the way of the Assyrians. The third aspect suggests that the Assyrian crisis will be very significant and brings about change for Judah.

Berges (2012:101) is of the opinion that the last part of the verse, 'the King of Assyria', is most probably a clarifying gloss. If the latter part of the verse is omitted, it does seem possible that the sentence could be taken as a promise of salvation. Yahweh will bring on them days unlike any they have seen since the time when the kingdom was still united under David and Solomon. It could, however, also be seen when taking the words 'bring upon you' in mind that it might mean disaster and that it is therefore connected to the gloss – the threat of the Assyrian king.

5.3.5 Exposition of Isaiah 7:18-25

The great devastation

18 On that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is at the end of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

19 And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thornbushes, and on all the pastures.

20 On that day the Lord will shave with a razor that is hired beyond the River – with the king of Assyria – the head and the hair of the feet, and it will sweep away the beard also.

21 On that day a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep,

22 and because of the abundance of milk that they give, he will eat curds, for everyone who is left in the land will eat curds and honey.

23 On that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briars and thorns.

24 With bow and arrows a man will come there, for all the land will be briars and thorns.

25 And as for all the hills that used to be hoed with a hoe, you will not come there for fear of briars and thorns, but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep tread.

Verse 18: The prophetic formula 'on that day' in verse 18, suggests that this section is not to be a formal section but a secondary composition on the part of the redactor, and Kaiser (1972:107) writes that it entails four short prophecies of warning that forms part of the so-called Isaiah-*Denkschrift* in Isaiah 6:1-9:6. The 'on that day' opening statement links the of verses 18, 20 and 23 of this short oracles in a meaningful way to one another even though it is not possible to say for certain that it is the authentic words of Isaiah. When I read verse 18, the first two 'in that day' opening statements describes what Yahweh will do to the people and the land of Judah and the last two statements specify the impact of Yahweh's actions on the people still living in Judah. With reference to 'on that day', Tull (2010:170) writes that more than any other prophetic book, Isaiah employs the phrase 'on that day'. Here in chapter 7 a series of disasters is highlighted with the words 'on that day'.

Sweeney (1996:155) writes that the attention is moved away from King Ahaz and focuses on the land and the people of Judah making verses 18 and 19 a perplexing case. What makes verse 18 even more confusing is the reference to Egypt and Assyria: 'the Lord will whistle for the fly that is at the end of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.' The reason for the confusion is that this verse introduces a nation, Egypt, that is not an immediate threat to Judah, as is the case with Assyria. These nations are introduced by means of a series of metaphors and Prokhorov (2015:90) states the reason is to emphasise the impact of devastation that these nations can inflict upon Judah. Smith (2007:217) comments that sometime in the future, Yahweh will call a large number of foreign nations into the land and this infiltration is compared to Yahweh's 'whistling' of flies and bees. This metaphor depicts a large swarm of enemy troops that would occupy the land.

Verse 19 gives a description as to where the bees and flies will settle. The reference to Egypt as flies and Assyria as bees serves as a metaphor of the danger that they pose to Judah and that Yahweh could just whistle to them to come. According to Smith (2007:217), it is not clear why Isaiah chose these exact symbols to convey his prophetic utterance, but it could possibly be that he was just interested to use it as a symbolic metaphor to create a picture of the millions of swarming insects that would make life unbearable. Judgment and despair is a strong nuance in these metaphors. Smith (2007) also concludes that even though Egypt is weak and no immediate threat to Judah, years later, 609-605 BCE, they defeated Josiah and ruled the nation for a short time as it is written in II Chronicle 35:20-36:4.

Verse 20 poses still a threat and looming disaster from the Assyrians. Kaiser (1983:176) states that the significance of the metaphor cannot be limited to the mentioning of the beard alone as a shameful dishonour. The shaving is also to be taken literally because it is a way to harshly humiliate someone. The razor that is hired is a direct reference to the mighty Assyrian army and Smith (2007:218) makes the analogy that the 'hired barber', namely the Assyrians, is there to humiliate their Hebrew captives by shaving all their hair. A noteworthy factual comment made by Baker (2013:43) is that from wall reliefs from the period of the Old Testament, one can see that men from Israel and Syria had 'pointed, goatee-type' beards and those from Assyria, 'full, bushy' beards. This contrasted with the Egyptians whom were clean shaven except for 'artificial' hair on their chins. Smith (2007:118)³² makes a further assumption that the imagery can be regarded in two ways, either as a literal treatment of war prisoners or a metaphor of shaving of the land. In my view, both imagery options are plausible because literally, both threatening nations whom Yahweh used against the people of Judah could have physically shaved the people of Judah as a literal form of humiliation. As for the metaphorical shaving of the land, it encompasses trauma elements within this traumatic event. Wildberger (1991:324) postulates further that this message is

³² Smith (2007:218) further elaborates on the two invading nations, Syria and Israel, by stating that both lived on the other side of the Euphrates River.

to be considered with relation to 7:1-17, where Isaiah would refer to Ahaz who bought Tiglath-Pileser's III assistance, but the irony is that the assistance that he bought only brought him imprisonment and humiliation.

Verses 21 and 22 pose the question whether it is an announcement of disaster or salvation. Roberts (2015:127) writes that verse 21 and 22 contain both a threat and a promise, whereas Smith (2007:218) is of the opinion this oracle focuses on the devastation of the land and can therefore not be a positive salvation oracle even though verse 22 refers to an abundance of food. It is of interest to note that scholars disagree in their understanding of this verse and Tull (2010:171) and Roberts has the same view that verse 22a is very clear, where there is milk, one cannot speak about disaster because the verse echoes the words of 'curds' and 'honey' of verse 15, that accentuate their luxury even though only a small number of people will survive the disaster. Smith (2007:218) elaborates further on his stance that this should be interpreted as a negative oracle when he states that in verse 21 the man only has one calf and two goats, which makes a very small herd and makes survival disastrous.

Blenkinsopp (2000:236) agrees with Roberts (2015:127) and Tull (2010:171) when he encapsulates:

But it is possible to interpret it otherwise: either in the sense that one cow and two sheep represent the minimum for a household to survive or that the loss of cultivated land will have left ample space for grazing.

Roberts (2015:127) renders a further explanation that verses 21-22 suggests that only a small remnant with a few animals will survive, but that it will suffice because these animals will produce enough so that the surviving remnant will have ample to live from. I must concur with the interpretations of Tull, Blenkinsopp and Roberts, because the dualism of this oracle pertaining a threat and a promise as is contained in verses 21-22 of this narrative, portrays on the one hand the days of judgment and despair, which shall come upon

Judah as stated in verse 17, but on the other hand it reinforces the idea that the remaining remnant will survive as a proclamation of hope for the future.

Verses 23-25 continue the portrayal of the devastated countryside with its overgrown and ruined vineyard, similar to the 'thorns and thistles' of the vineyard parable in Isaiah 5:6. Berges (2012:102) writes that verses 23-25 are marked by a three-fold 'there' and a three-fold mention of 'thorns and thistles'. It is his viewpoint that these images express meagerness that implies the destruction of the socio-cultural situation. Kaiser (1972:176) proposes a different explanation for verses 23-25. He does not see it as imagery or metaphors, but as literal examples of the forsakenness of the land because of the depopulation with reference to Isaiah 6:11 and 7:16. Hayes and Irvine (1987:140) state that the close ties this oracle has with Isaiah 5:1-7, include both Israel and Judah, which suggests that the judgment from Yahweh will strike them both. I believe thus, the good news Isaiah was set out to deliver, has become a message of despair and imminent trauma such as fear, anxiety and physical suffering because of Ahaz's and the people of Judah's failure to show faith.

5.4 An expositional perspective on Isaiah 8

5.4.1 Literary context of Isaiah 8

When Isaiah 8 is studied as a unit, there is a clear resemblance to Isaiah 7 in so far as the theme and content of Isaiah's prophesy. The similarities in both chapters are the symbolic name giving of children, the promise of the demise of Israel, as well as Aram and the eminent threat of Assyria to Judah. In chapter 8, Isaiah addresses the ordinary people of Judah. Smith (2007:220) writes that his conversation with the Judean people is about the possible war situation through the birth announcement in Isaiah 8:1-4, and the reason for this is because they were not witnesses when Isaiah gave the sign to King Ahaz. The historical background in this chapter is still the Syro-Ephraimite crisis of 734-732 BCE. De Jong (2007:68) explains that the announcement of

disaster from Aram and Ephraim is done to encourage Ahaz and the people of Judah to have faith in Yahweh and his promise of protection of the Davidic house. The intricacy of chapters 7 and 8 are underlined by Childs (2001:71) when he writes that chapter 8:1-4 'seems quite straightforward in comparison with the series of mysterious and concealed references in chapter 7.' The Isaiah 8:1-4 pericope, according to Watts (1985:111), is a first-person narrative referred to as a prophetic autobiography containing a prophetic message and a statement of its meaning. Tull (2010:178) is also of the opinion that there are parallels between chapter 6 and chapter 8 and she refers to the first-person narrative and the repetition of 'this people' and also their unresponsiveness to the prophetic message of Isaiah. What are also highlighted because of their indifference to the prophecy of Isaiah are the themes of divine devotion and the prediction of desolation.

Prokhorov (2015:125)³³ forms an interesting correlation between chapters 7 and 8 as he sees it as part of the final unit of the *Denkschrift* (8:1-9:6). A further correlation between the two chapters, almost as a contradiction, is that chapter 7 presents scenes of uncertainty and despair in verses 11-13, which in verses 14-16 turns into a prophecy of support and hope. The sway between despair and hope is clearly visible in chapter 8 where it starts with a prophecy of doom in verses 6-8a with a mounting amount of tension and gloom, to then swiftly become a prophecy of support and hope in verses 8b-10. Sweeney (1996:166) also draws these parallels between chapter 7 and chapter 8:1-15 insofar as it provides a comparable account concerning the meaning of Isaiah's children names. Chapter 7 recounts to the significance of *Shear-jashub* and Immanuel for the Davidic dynasty and chapter 8:1-15 relates to the significance of *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* in the Assyrian crisis. Tull (2010:178) makes the further assumption that Isaiah has composed chapters 6, 7 and 8 in relation to the Syro-Ephraimite crisis and her assessment also draws the supposition that chapters 6 and 8 may be more closely aligned, whereas chapter 7 or key parts thereof was submitted later to draw the attention back to King Ahaz and away from the people of Judah. There is also

³³ Prokhorov (2015:125) discusses on the element Immanuel as a scope of deliverance, which are mentioned in this study in following chapters.

a difference in the temporal setting as explained by Hom (2012:30), where Isaiah 7 precedes King Ahaz's decision to rely on the Assyrians and Isaiah 8 suggests that Ahaz's decision is in the past.

5.4.2 Structure and delineation of Isaiah 8

Many scholars' works in commentaries and academic books have been studied, and with a few exceptions on one or two verses, especially the last verses of chapter 8, most of them have allocated the same demarcation to chapter 8. Traditionally chapter 8 has been divided into six units, according to Childs (2001:71), namely verses 1-4, 5-8, 9-10, 11-15, 16-18 and 19-21. Sweeney (1996:166) argues for a different structural division than the six units and he explains that the end of the first literary unit ends at 8:15, because 8:1-15 use a first person autobiographical style structure. Smith (2007:220) concurs with Sweeney, stating that the autobiographical style is structured around the three introductory 'the Lord spoke/said to me' oracles that can be found in verses 1, 5 and 11. Sweeney (1996:167) also sees this unit to form part of the *Denkschrift* because of the autobiographical style and the first-person account rendering it possible to be the words spoken by Isaiah himself. However, Childs (2001: 71) disagrees with Sweeney when he argues that there is a sharp contrast in style when chapter 7 and 8 are compared, and that places a doubt on this theory and that the onus should rather be on the narrative, because chapter 8 is not just a duplication of the sign progression as found in chapter 7. I agree with the summation of Prokhorov (2015:126), explaining that the relationship between the material of chapter 7 and 8 points to co-dependence, meaning that chapter 7 is not just a redactional addendum but also an integral part of the *Denkschrift*.

Smith (2007:220) further delineates the unit into several sections based on the topics within the chapter, beginning with the introductory clause 'the Lord spoke to me/said to me' as a consistent factor within the chapter. The units discussed are:

- Isaiah 8:1-4 'The birth of Maher-shalal-hash-baz'
- Isaiah 8:5-10 'The coming Assyrian flood'
- Isaiah 8:11-15 'Fear God, not human armies'
- Isaiah 8:16-22 'Following God's instructions'

The commentary of Kaiser (1972:110), even though it is an older work, also provides a more detailed demarcation that is valuable for an in-depth analysis of chapter 8. Kaiser divides chapter 8 as:

- Isaiah 8:1-4 'Spoil-speed-prey-hasten'
- Isaiah 8:5-8 'Siloah and the Euphrates'
- Isaiah 8:9-10 'God is with us'
- Isaiah 8:11-15 'Right standards'
- Isaiah 8:16-18 'I hope in Him'
- Isaiah 8:19-22 'A warning against superstition'

Tull (2010:178) refers to chapter 8 as 'Isaiah's testimonies' and divides it as:

- Isaiah 8:1-4 'Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz'
- Isaiah 8:5-8 'This people has refused the waters of Shiloah'
- Isaiah 8:9-10 'Gird yourselves and be dismayed'
- Isaiah 8:11-15 'Do not call conspiracy'
- Isaiah 8:16-18 'Bind up the testimony'
- Isaiah 8:19-9:1 'The gloom of anguish'

Roberts (2015:128) divides chapter 8 as follows:

- Isaiah 8:1-4 'The Maher-shalal-hush-baz oracle'
- Isaiah 8:5-10 'Another Immanuel oracle'
- Isaiah 8:11-15 'Whom should one fear'
- Isaiah 8:16-18 'Sealing the testimony for the future'
- Isaiah 8:19-23a 'An oracle against necromancy'

For this chapter, a combination of commentary delineations will be used to provide a comprehensive exposition of chapter 8. The scholarly works of Kaiser, Smith, Tull and Roberts will serve as guidelines for the exposition of the text in chapter 8. The aim, however, would also be to identify the verses indicating trauma and traumatic events pertaining to the study.

5.4.3 Exposition of Isaiah 8:1-4

The Maher-shalal-hush-baz oracle

1 Then the LORD said to me, "Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters, 'Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz.'
2 And I will get reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me."
3 And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz;
4 for before the boy knows how to cry 'My father' or 'My mother', the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria."

This passage also belongs to the Syro-Ephraimite period as the incident in verses 1-4 took place after the events in 7:1-17. Prose is used in Isaiah 8:1-4 and it is generally agreed that it relates to the activity of the prophet Isaiah himself. The pericope is a first-person narrative as described by Watts (1985:111) because of its prophetic autobiography. Wildberger (1991:333) writes because of its first-person style, it is believed that Isaiah has written it himself. De Jong (2007:67) explains that the passage consists of two parts namely 8:1-2 and 8:3-4 and that both these passages focus on the symbolic name *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, which means 'quick booty, fast spoil', and 'spoil is hurrying, plunder is hastening'.

Verse 1: In verse 1, Childs (2001:72) writes that Isaiah is instructed to write the name *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* on a publicly visible tablet where after he asked two well-known citizens Uriah and Zechariah to witness the time of the writing. Referring to the tablet, Roberts (2015:129) articulates that there is a debate if it suggests a large writing tablet made of an unbending material such as wood, stone or metal, or whether it suggests a piece of papyrus or leather

that could be rolled up as a scroll. Moreover, at that time the meaning of the name *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz* was perplexing to everyone.³⁴ The sign-name *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz* grammatically is not smooth and Hom (2012:31) writes that it may be understood as an expression of the sudden and very violent attack of the Assyrians adding to the shock value of the appearance of the Assyrians. At best a traumatic experience with traumatic consequences for the people of Judah. Tull (2010:179)³⁵ elaborates on the incomprehensibility of the name when she writes that at first it was not clear who or what *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz* is, but after the name was written on a large tablet, a female prophet bears Isaiah's son.

Verse 2: In order to adhere to Yahweh's command, Isaiah summoned two reliable witnesses to witness his actions of writing the name on a tablet. Baker (2013:45) gives an interesting explanation on the role of witnesses in ancient times detailing that important official documents were not only sealed, but also witnessed by people whose names were inscribed at the end of the tablet as well. Baker (2013:45) further explains that the witness Uriah was the chief priest at the time and in charge of anything that needed to be placed in sanctuary, and Roberts (2015:129) writes that Zechariah may have been the maternal grandfather of Hezekiah, making him the father-in-law of King Ahaz, as it is written about in II Kings 18:2.

Verse 3: The next act in this small drama is the pregnancy and the birth of the child *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz*. The identity of the prophetess and who she was is an enigma for many scholars and has been debated through the years. Blenkinsopp (2000:238) believes the prospective mother is a prophetess because there is no evidence that this anonymous woman is Isaiah's wife. However, we assume that she was Isaiah's wife and Blenkinsopp (2000:238) explains that the assumption is based on the notion that she is represented as being part of the *nābî'* class or that she might even have been a member of the Jerusalem temple staff. Prokhorov (2015:132) further attests a well-

³⁴ The name *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz* as a metaphorical trauma marker will be fully discussed in the following chapters.

³⁵ Tull (2010:179) refers to the typical sequence found in conception; birth/naming/reason for name appears.

established view that the term prophetess implies that she partakes in the 'prophetic quality of the father and her children.'

It is believed that the female prophet was Isaiah's wife even though it is nowhere stated as such. After giving birth to this child, Yahweh told Isaiah to name this son *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz*, which according to Smith (2007:222), signifies that both the spoils (*shalal*) of Samaria (the capital of Israel) and Damascus (the capital of Syria) will be plundered by the king of Assyria as it is written in Isaiah 8:4. In this context, the Hebrew name *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz* contains two comparable imperative verbs. Smith (2007:222) explains that these two verbs 'quick' and 'swift', plus the two verbs 'spoil' and 'plunder', actually says the same thing twice and it could be translated as 'hurry spoil, be swift plunder'. Hence, this translation and interpretation presume the defeat of a nation in the near future contributing to feelings of despair for a possible war and devastation scenario.

A further interesting correlation drawn by Tull (2010:179) is between chapter 5:18-19 and the name *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz*. In chapter 5:18-19, Isaiah is sneered at by his challengers and Tull (2010:179) says Isaiah describes these challengers as 'dragging iniquity along with cords of falsehood' and saying 'let him make haste' because they were in disbelief of his prophecies. Tull (2010:180) explains that the verb *yēmahēr* (haste) is the same verb as *mahēr* and 'let him speed' *yāhîšâ* (speed) is the same verb as *hāš*, indicating similarity with the child's name in chapter 8:1-4. Isaiah 5:25-30, according to Tull (2010:180), also indicates refers to judgment because reference is made of a faraway nation that would come swiftly (*mēhērâ*) to answer the divine summons and the Assyrians is a direct expression thereof.

Verse 4: The name of Isaiah's newborn son demonstrates Yahweh's sovereignty. Prince (2005:61) explains that before the child could say the Hebrew equivalent of 'father' or 'mother', the Syrian-Israel alliance would be removed and be no more, because Damascus (Syria) and Samaria (Israel) would be carried away by the Assyrians. Kaiser (1972:111) also states that the child is meant to become a living sign of truth of his father's prophecies

and the words 'before the child is old enough to utter the first coherent sounds, the word "father", and "mother",' the danger that threatens the Davidic kingdom will be removed. Taking these utterances into account, Kaiser (1972:111) attests that this implies that the prophet Isaiah is setting a limit of about nine months. Wildberger (1991:338) concurs with Kaiser that it is only at this point before the child can speak properly, that we can understand exactly what the inscription on the tablet means by implying that the riches of Damascus and the 'booty' of Samaria will be captured and brought into the presence of the Assyrian king. Tull's (2010:179) interpretation of the time limit based on the child's name is that even before he says his first words, it can be estimated that he is about a year old or even a bit younger. Smith (2007:222) and Roberts (2015:130) both concur that the prophecy was fulfilled in less than two years in 732 BCE when Damascus and Samaria were defeated by Assyria. Roberts (2015:130) further postulates that if the Davidic court would only trust the prophetic words, there would have been no need for King Ahaz and the people of Judah to rush into a disparaging alliance with Assyria that would later require Judah to be submissive to the Assyrian kingdom.

5.4.4 Exposition of Isaiah 8:5-10

The coming Assyrian invasion

5 The LORD spoke to me again:

6 "Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and rejoice over Rezin and the son of Remaliah,

7 therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks,

8 and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel."

9 Be broken, you peoples, and be shattered; give ear, all you far countries; strap on your armor and be shattered; strap on your armor and be shattered.

10 Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.

The original historical setting for Isaiah 8:5-10 must have been prior to the *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz* oracle in Isaiah 8:1-4 and Roberts (2015:133) postulates that it is most probably in the same time period as the *Immanuel* oracle in Isaiah 7:10-17 and the reason being is that the symbolic name *Immanuel* is central to both of them. Childs (2001:73) differs from Roberts about the *Immanuel* oracle, when he states that the setting reflects a time later than 7:10, because here Isaiah has challenged Ahaz to respond in faith as Yahweh has made a promise to the house of David. Therefore, in chapter 8 the decision of unbelief has already been made and the consequences will bestow upon the people of Judah into incidents of traumatic experiences.

Verse 5: The transition to the following unit in chapter 8:5-10 is somewhat abrupt. In chapter 8:1-4, we hear of salvation prophecies, through the son *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz*, but then suddenly there is a shift in tone and mood. Seitz (1993:81) writes that within this context of verse 5, the object of the arraignment is not the royal house (chapter 7) but it is against 'this people'. De Jong (2007:70) states the announcement of judgment of 'this people' and that they will be punished because of their disobedience. Within this arraignment, for me lies, the tilt between despair because of disobedience and hope because of having faith in Yahweh. Despair can only become hope within an obedience and faithful setting for 'this people'.

Verse 6: The interpretation of verse 6 is complicated because 'this people' is not conclusively identified, and the reason being for that is because it seems very unlikely that the people of Judah would in any way rejoice over Rezin who is attacking them. Many scholars have tried to address this specific scenario concerning the phrase 'this people' and Watts (2005:117) for one proposes that 'this people' refers to the rejoicing by the people in the northern nation of Israel who have joined the Rezin anti-Assyrian coalition. Hayes and Irvine (1987:146) believe that 'this people' is a group of people in Judah who wanted to join the anti-Assyrian and follow Rezin because they disagreed with the policies that Ahaz upheld. Eidevall (2009:37) agrees with Hayes and Irvine that Isaiah was addressing a Jerusalemite 'faction' who was in favour of

joining such a coalition, and Blenkinsopp (2000:240) concurs with such an assumption even though such a 'faction' is not mentioned in the text. Among modern commentators, the most popular solution to the puzzling problem of 'this people', has been to emend the verb 'rejoice' to 'melt', so that it would read that the people of Judah were 'melting with fear' and the reason for them 'melting' was that they were being attacked by Rezin. This proposed interpretation is supported by Eidevall (2009: 37), writing that the people of Judah and its leaders who are 'melting' in fear of Rezin and Pekah is creditable because it is compatible with Isaiah 7:1-9. I however, have a problem with this assumption because it seems if all these opinions ignored the announcement that Isaiah made in chapter 8:1-4, where it is clearly stated that Rezin would be defeated. Hence, it is likely that the people of Judah would rejoice for their enemy will soon be gone. The supposition that the people of Judah also make is that them asking help from Assyria was the correct option to take rather than to trust Yahweh.

In verse 6, Yahweh is metaphorically compared to the gentle flowing waters of the Shiloah and this water comes historically from the Gihon spring in the Kidron Valley. Beyer (2013:109) writes that Gihon spring with its conduits was Jerusalem's main water supply unit. Tull (2010:180) gives a metaphorical explanation that Isaiah's prophecy is a warning that is encased in water, and that 'the water of Shiloah that flow gently' could here signify the local waters of Jerusalem, and this signify Yahweh and Yahweh's intent for Judah.

Verse 7: The gentle water of Shiloah stands here in stark contrast with the 'mighty and many' flood waters of the River, namely the king of Assyria. Tull (2010:181) suggests that foreign floods will overwhelm those who despise the local source when they search elsewhere for nourishment. Kaiser (1972:113) sums it up when he writes that the verse in the passage is not concerned whether the king has any occasion to provide a new water source, but it is concerned with the foolish decision that the king makes to place his trust in the Assyrian king and not in Yahweh. Hom (2012:33) notes that the people of Judah would have known the flood-imagery because this type of metaphor

was familiar in ancient eastern cultures. The gentle flow of the waters of Shiloah, according to Eidevall (2009:39), stands metaphorically for the protective powers of Yahweh, which at times can be enormous and at other times it could be unnoticeable and it is this power of Yahweh that 'this people' have rejected.

Verse 8 depicts the violent floodwaters of the Euphrates that serves as a metaphor for the Assyrian armies. Roberts (2015:134) elaborates on the effect of this violent floodwaters stating that the floodwater would completely submerge the north and flow into Judah where it will reach up to the neck. This metaphorical oracle carries with it not only a punishment clause but also a judgment warning, which in itself pertains to traits of possible threats, anxiety and fear that forms part of the trauma experience for the people of Judah. The use of the Euphrates River, stretching its floodwaters out like wings, is for Smith (2007:224) a depiction of the Judean nation who is almost totally destroyed, because it reaches to the neck of 'this people'. Roberts (2015:134) writes that the use of the word wings are never used to refer to rivers or water, but should in this context be seen as Yahweh's outspread wings that will fill the land. Roberts (2015:134) further explains the reason for understanding the 'wings' metaphor as referring to Yahweh is because Yahweh is often portrayed metaphorically as a bird with wings outstretched to protect His people and he gives references to Deuteronomy 32:11, Psalms 17:8; 36:8; 57:2; 61:5; 63:8 and 91:4. The fundamental assumption of this verse pertaining the metaphor of water and secondly the imagery of a bird concludes the people's failure to believe and trust in Yahweh.

This judgment prophecy ends with a surprising reference to *Immanuel* seemingly referring to Isaiah 7:14 and both Roberts (2015:135) and Irvine (1990:192) agree that the address to *Immanuel* is a rhetorical device to accentuate the meaning of the child's symbolic name to address Isaiah's real audience that is the Judean royal court. For me there is an element of hope within this symbolic name at this point for the people of Judah, because even though the Assyrian flood will overflow the north and threaten the south, Judah can still take comfort within this traumatic climate that Yahweh's

protection is still available to them as a people and His promise of 'Yahweh is with us' has not been revoked.

Verses 9-10: Again in verses 9-10 the shift is in the prophetic tone and the content is radical and differs from the preceding prophecies, addresses and audience. Childs (2001:73) writes that the verse 'be broken, you people, and be shattered' has a prophetic utterance of a proclamation of defeat for the enemies. Kaiser (1972:115)³⁶ clarifies the two verses (9-10) as a short hymn of triumph and if it is read in association with the prophecy of warning, it gives the assurance that the Assyrian attack that is to come will not fulfill the aim. It is sets for itself to destroy Judah or that of the present enemies of Aram and Israel that want to conquer Judah because of Yahweh's promise through the sign of *Immanuel*. This salvation oracle oddly challenges the people of Judah with figures of speech such as an ironic call for battle and Smith (2007:224) writes that this figurative speech in itself becomes a threat of defeat if anyone should be so brave to fight or go up against the will of Yahweh for 'God is with us'. Irvine (1990:195) concludes that Isaiah had most probably Judah's enemies Syria and Israel in mind when he denounced their plans and declared that they will not be successful and during the Syro-Ephraimite crisis, Isaiah as a prophet showed that he took the 'Zion-Davidic' divinity sincerely and he therefore urged the royal house of Ahaz to follow suite.

5.4.5 Exposition of Isaiah 8:11-15

Fear God, Wait for the Lord

11 For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying:

12 "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.

13 But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

14 And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

³⁶ Kaiser (1972:115) further states that Isaiah saw Assyria as Yahweh's rod of correction. This will be discussed in following chapters as part of trauma.

15 And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.”

What follows in Isaiah 8:11-15 is a private oracle of warning to the prophet and his followers and the difficult choices they had to make as they lived in political and religious circumstances that did not always trust and honour Yahweh. Smith (2007:225) construes that this unit can be divided into three parts:

- Isaiah 8:11 – Yahweh speaks to the prophet Isaiah
- Isaiah 8:12-13 – Fear Yahweh, not what people fear
- Isaiah 8:14-15 – Yahweh can be a sanctuary

Verse 11: In verse 11, Wildberger (1991:356) writes that Isaiah describes briefly how it happened that he was lead to speak the following admonition and threat. Verse 11 serves as an introduction to what is to follow in the ensuing verses and as such is the passage a form of confession on the part of the prophet Isaiah. Watts (1985:120) explains that verse 11 as the beginning of the pericope, introduces a first-person narrative in prose to report a warning. On this point Roberts (2015:136) writes that the only way to determine who ‘this people’ is in this verse is to assign a date to this prophecy. However, this is easier said than done and Roberts (2015:137) construes that because of the present literary placement and the mentioning of the two houses of Judah and Israel in Isaiah 8:14, it suggests a late stage in the Syro-Ephraimite war but ambiguity of who ‘this people’ is, but it might be Judah and Israel if the later verses are studied. Smith (2007:226) makes a further supposition that the reference to ‘this people’ previously carried a negative connection because in Isaiah 8:6, ‘this people’ were the ones that rejected Yahweh.

Verse 12 begins with a conspiracy charge that is, according to Irvine (1990: 199), aimed as an accusation against King Ahaz and the reason therefore was the growing discontent of Ahaz in the 730’s BCE, where many have hoped that Pekah’s coup in 734 BCE and Samaria’s coalition with Rezin would prompt King Ahaz to change his own position. Irvine (1990:199) further

explains that the refusal from King Ahaz to adhere to advice was the reason that he was then subsequently accused of conspiracy. It is within this political context, writes Sweeney (1996:173), that Yahweh instructed Isaiah not to fear the Syro-Ephraimite coalition. On the subject of fear, Tull (2010:183) writes about a divine word that resembles a previous word that Isaiah gave to Ahaz in Isaiah 7:4, namely 'do not fear'. It is of interest to note that she also construes that '*qešer* (fear) has a specific meaning in relation to royalty as 'treasonous conspiracy seeking to usurp the throne'. Wildberger (1991:358) adds to this when he states that the conspiracy was within Jerusalem and that the rumors that were circulating was about a plot being hatched against the house of the king and his associates. Within this verse, the nature of the type of conspiracy is not explained, but Smith (2007:226) states that several options can be possible such as can be found in (a) Isaiah 7:4 where Yahweh warned King Ahaz not to fear the conspiratorial alliance between Rezin and Pekah to demolish Judah; (b) here Smith (2007:226) writes that the agreement between King Ahaz and Assyria can also be rendered as a conspiracy; (c) some could accuse Isaiah and his followers of conspiracy against King Ahaz because of their opposition to his plans and lastly; (d) the rumors that a plan was formed to depose of King Ahaz and replace him with Tabeel as it is written in Isaiah 7:6.

Verse 13: In verse 13, 'But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy', the same Hebrew root for 'fear' and 'dread' in Isaiah 8:12 is used, namely *yārē'* and Beyer (2013:93) states that here Yahweh challenges Isaiah and his followers to focus on fearing Yahweh and to treat Him as holy. Kaiser (1972:117) sees that since Isaiah's call in 735 BCE, he has accumulated a group of followers, which is, however, not described more closely but also opposes 'this people'. Beyer (2013:93) and Smith (2007:226) both states that to be able to see Yahweh as holy, requires the same adoration and praise given to Yahweh by the seraphim in Isaiah 6. The prophet Isaiah is encouraged to be steadfast in his awe of Yahweh and Clements (1980:99) describes the 'holiness' as an emotional feeling of awe, as well as fear and that Isaiah should persist even in the face of physical threats and shunning by his people. These emotional experiences and fluctuations that Isaiah

experienced contribute to the feelings of despair and hope within a traumatic setting.

Verse 14: To accentuate the complexity and intertwined meanings of this passage, one has to grasp the links that this passage shows with Isaiah's extraordinary experience in the divine throne room in chapter 6 where Yahweh distinguished between Isaiah and 'this people'. Wagner (2007:261) assumes that their active opposition defines the identity of 'this people' in verses 12-14. He states that although 'this people' are faithful adherents of the law, it does not make them faithful to Yahweh and he explains: 'From the opening oracle of Isaiah, the relationship between Yahweh and Yahweh's people is characterized as one of profound estrangement: 'Israel does not know me, and the people does not understand me' (1:3). Beginning in Isaiah 6, the prophet Isaiah adopts a particularly jarring phrase to refer to the unfaithful nation: 'this people' (Wagner 2007:261).

With reference to 'this people' and also assuming that the two houses mentioned in verse 14 refers to Judah and Israel, Roberts (2015:137) is of the opinion that the inclusive definition of 'this people' suggests the present text may also be equally inclusive of all sides facing fear and suspecting each other of being traitors and conspirators. Roberts (2015:137) further explained that everyone was so blinded by their own fear that they completely forgot to look to Yahweh for salvation and in doing so, they also forgot to put their fear into perspective. I must concur with Roberts that the political challenges and struggles overwhelmed the divine promises and that was forgotten in the face of the overpowering fear, setting the psychological scene for immense trauma. Not only is Isaiah referring to Israel and Judah, but also the text insinuates that there is a 'this' and 'them' scenario, setting a traumatic undertone that is reoccurring in the fear that they experience. In this fearful circumstances Isaiah says in verse 14a that Yahweh will become a sanctuary but Clements (1980:99) writes that the word 'sanctuary' is peculiar for it affirms Yahweh's threats towards Judah because King Ahaz has rejected Isaiah's repeated appeals. Clements (1980:99) describes the two

metaphorical images of Yahweh as a 'stone' and a 'rock' in a negative notion, because the rock that actually should be a place of fortitude becomes a stone to stumble over. The King and Judah find themselves literally here between a rock and a hard place because of the decisions that were made.

Verse 15: The words 'and many shall stumble on it' indicates the situation, which had been brought on by Ahaz's actions. Clements (1980:100) writes that Yahweh's salvation, implied in the sign-names given to all three children, would still stand. A supplementary explanation is given by Oswalt (2003:201) that Isaiah reverses the traditional imagery when he describes Yahweh as a sanctuary, but that He also can become a 'rock' to fall over and that many from both the houses of Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will fall over this rock, be broken in the process, 'snared' and captured. For those like Ahaz, who turned their backs on it, defeat and ruin will stare them in the face. Verbs such as 'stumble', 'fall', 'be broken', 'snared' and 'taken' underline the traumatic tone and tragic consequences of events to come.

5.4.6 Exposition of Isaiah 8:16-18

Bind up the testimony

16 Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples.

17 I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.

18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

These three verses refer back to the incident of Isaiah 8:1-4 where Isaiah wrote the name *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz* on a tablet.

Verse 16: The verse begins with two exhortations viz. the binding of the testimony and the sealing of the teaching. Wildberger (1991:368) explains that the 'sealing' of the message means that Isaiah estimated that it would take a long time before what he has said will take full effect. Sweeney (1996:174) writes that the sealing of the testimony by his followers almost suggest feelings of frustration on the part of Isaiah against King Ahaz because of his

decision to rather ask assistance from the Assyrians than completely relying on Yahweh. The followers of Yahweh, according to Smith (2007:229), who were willing to listen to the instructions of Yahweh through the prophetic utterances made by Isaiah, are called 'my disciples'. What we do not know, are how many of these followers there were.

Verse 17 begins with 'I will wait for the Lord', implying that the prophet Isaiah will give no further prophecies until such time as when the message of the children's names and the punishment for the Judeans rejection of Yahweh's help, has taken place. In verse 17 Isaiah laments that 'I will wait for the Lord' and Kaiser (1972:120) refers to this sigh of Isaiah as prayer of mourning. If it is a prayer of mourning, the meaning of the words 'wait' and 'hope' signify for me a condition of acute tension and it can be described that hope is the tense expectation of some future salvation. The words 'who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob' emphasises the full impact of the divine rejection. King Ahaz has rejected Yahweh's word and now Clements (1980:101) states that now Yahweh rejects King Ahaz and the people of Judah. Yahweh has not rejected Isaiah but turned His face from the rebellious people of Judah. Because of this rejection of his message by King Ahaz, Childs (2001:76) writes that Isaiah withdraws himself from the public milieu, but he does not retreat in despair. All Isaiah could do is to trust Yahweh and wait. For me, behind the concept of 'trust' and 'wait' are the basic concepts of posttraumatic growth of hope and salvation, which are important traits to withstand a traumatic onslaught on the individual, but also on the community at large.

Verse 18: In this verse Isaiah recommits himself to Yahweh and His plans, despite the rebellious and disobedient behaviour of King Ahaz and the rest of the people of Judah. This commitment is personal and it involves himself and his children. Tull (2010:185) comments that Isaiah is pointing out the fact that his children and himself are not only mere signs but that they are 'signs and wonders' indeed, and Clements (1980:101) further reverberates that all three children, *Shear-jashub*, *Immanuel* and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* were to serve as 'signs' (*ōtôt*) and 'symbols' (*môptîm*) through the names that they were given. Childs (2001:76) explains that a sign is a foretaste of judgment for the

faithless Israel, but it is also a promise to the faithful remnant and therefore a sign is a pledge of the future, but it can also conceal a mysterious reality. In my view, all three names carry the meaning of Isaiah's own name, symbolising a message from Yahweh and perhaps Isaiah saw his own name, 'God saves' as a sign just like the names of his children to carry a double-edged meaning of despair and hope.

There has never been any question that verses 16-18 come from Isaiah. Both Wildberger (1991:366) and Berges (2012:103) state that verse 18 concludes the memoir, because the language in 'Yahweh who dwells on Mount Zion' takes one back to the beginning of the memoir in chapter 6:1 where Isaiah saw him sitting on the throne.

5.4.7 Exposition of Isaiah 8:19-22

Following God's instructions

19 And when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?

20 To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.

21 They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward.

22 And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.

The last verses of the chapter (19-22) are plagued with considerable complications. Tull (2010:186) explains these complications as 'transitional, perhaps secondarily added based on thematic connections with the preceding and the following.' Explaining the difficulty of these verses, Roberts (2015:141) writes that verses 19-20 represents a clear oracle directed against the practice of necromancy and that the following verses of 21-22 constitute the continuation of the oracle.

Verse 19: In verse 19, 'And when they say to you', Isaiah turns from talking to himself and his family to addressing a plural audience with words of warning about the dangers involving false religious practices. It is not certain who the 'they' are, but Clements (1980:102) suggests that it might mean anybody of the time or who reads this passage. Because of the looming Assyrian threat, anxiety and tension rose for the people of Judah. The reference to 'mediums' and 'necromancers', according to Childs (2001:77) became strong attractions even if it went directly against Isaiah's warnings and messages. Kaiser (1972:122) concur with Childs that in times of distress and superstition, faith is always lacking and Isaiah is warning the people against magical practices that comes to the forefront because of the coalition with Syria and Ephraim. This lack of faith and high levels of trauma manifesting as anxiety are prominent when the people of Judah are asked to inquire the 'dead' as the knowledge base regarding their situation. In the verse, Isaiah, does not discuss where the Israelites gets their information from, but Smith (2007:230) writes that in II Chronicles 28 and II Kings 16 there are ample evidence that King Ahaz promoted Baalism, worshipping of Syrian gods and the closing of the Jerusalem temple. Isaiah rightfully asked if people should not 'inquire of their God?' and Clements (1980:102) postulates that people who do not understand their fate who are also encouraged to participate in these practices of asking advice of the dead, will not seek advice and solace from Yahweh. It seems, if this is the case, that King Ahaz and the people of Judah are the biggest contributors to their own traumatic experiences.

Verse 20: 'To the teaching and to the testimony', according to Roberts (2015:142), are the concluding words of the previous verse that was uttered by Isaiah's opponents of the time, because according to them, if you want 'testimony', forget the message of the prophet and rather consult with the dead. In this statement, prophecy is placed in a direct rivalry position against necromancy. Blenkinsopp (2000:247) and Smith (2007:231) both disagree with this interpretation by stating that with the words 'teaching' and 'testimony' Isaiah is attesting that a better alternative is available in the true words of Yahweh, contained in testimonies and laws that Yahweh gave the nation. Blenkinsopp (2000:48) interprets this phrase as an oath confirming that there

will be consequences for those who consult the spirit world. The closing phrase, 'they have no dawn' must be, according to Clements (1980:102), a metaphorical reference meaning 'help'. Various scholars have different viewpoints on the imagery of 'dawn' and 'light' such as Roberts (2015:142), who sees 'dawn' as people who has no future. Sweeney (1996:184) postulates that 'dawn' means 'efficacy' or worth, Watts (1985:125) explains that 'dawn' is the power to overcome disaster and Kaiser (1972:122) suggests that 'dawn' means 'worth' and 'trust'. The imagery of the words 'dawn' and 'light' for me signifies the divine truth and hope embodied in faith, making it stand in stark contrast to the darkness and gloom that will come in Isaiah 8:21-22.

Verses 21-22 give a dooming description of 'hunger', 'distress', 'darkness', 'gloom' and 'anguish', all of which are attributes and markers for continuous trauma and trauma experiences. Smith (2007) writes that their feelings of distress and suffering will lead to a total disillusionment and a rejection of King Ahaz's political strategies as well as all the spiritual help he might ask from the spirit world. Oswalt (2003:312) believes that the people who are in darkness, gloom and distress, will not only curse their king but also Yahweh. There will be no assistance from either political adversaries or from Yahweh and Oswalt (2003:313) further postulates that even when they 'turn their faces upwards' there will only be suffering and darkness. On the feature of distress, Tull (2010:187) writes that the vocabulary in these verses looks to the earth only to see darkness and distress, and only when the people recognise that their survival depends entirely upon their trust in Yahweh, can they escape their distress. Smith (2007:232) writes that the phrase 'turn their faces upwards' comes at the end of verse 21 and can theoretically mean that the people will turn and look up at Yahweh, however nothing that follows in verse 22, make such a suggestion plausible. Blenkinsopp (2000:243) proposed that the final two words of Isaiah 8:21 should be connected to the final two words in Isaiah 8:22, thus meaning that when the people look upwards, all that they will see is distress, darkness, suffering and gloom. Again, if this was acceptable, these circumstances can be interpreted as major traumatic stress.

The 'darkness' can, according to Beyer (2013:167), either be seen as the punishment for unbelievers and will be the grave or Yahweh's intention not to deliver them from their punishment. Both these aspects correspond with the 'darkness' due to the war that was described at the end of the previous oracle in Isaiah 5:30, prophesying the demise of Judah.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter a literature and expositional study was done of Isaiah 7 and 8. Relevant commentaries and literature was studied to be able to compile a thorough expositional study of the two chapters to gain insight and knowledge. The structure and delineation of these chapters were examined and plausible choices between different scholarly interpretations were made to best advance this study. A broad scope of commentaries from the 20th century until today was studied and applied to the aim of this chapter to give a comprehensive overview of interpretations. The narratives in Isaiah 7 and 8 presents an account of Isaiah's prophecies in the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic War between 735-732 BCE. During this time Aram and Israel formed an alliance to remove the Davidic King Ahaz and to replace him with a ruler of their choice, namely Tabeel. At the same time Ahaz reached out to the Assyrians for assistance against the impending threat of war.

Trust, or the lack thereof and disobedience are the major themes of chapters 7 and 8. The consequence of disbelief throws the King, Isaiah's prophecy and the people of Judah into the fluctuating traumatic turmoil of despair and hope. In both chapters the narrative is designed to describe King Ahaz's refusal to trust and obey Yahweh's promises to protect the people of Judah against their enemies. King Ahaz rather placed his trust in the hands of his worst enemy, the Assyrians. Because of this lack of trust and faithlessness, the onset of situations leading to trauma, the experiences of trauma and traumatic environments become part of not only King Ahaz, but also of the prophet Isaiah and the people of Judah. Even Yahweh's involvement with Judah holds elements of trauma and fear, as especially the name *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*

relates to the judgment already reserved not only for the people of Judah, but also for their enemies.

An important aspect of this expositional exercise was the opportunity to identify possible trauma markers within the text of Isaiah 7 and 8, with a particular focus on the name giving of Isaiah's sons. It was found that the metaphorical names of Isaiah's sons played an important role in Isaiah's oracles of the time, and that it also contained prophecies for the future survival and posttraumatic growth for Judah. Trauma tendencies such as anxiety, despair, fear, tension, resilience and hope were identified, that are very important not only for the ensuing chapter to follow, but for the study as a whole. In the next chapter the tension between King Ahaz, Isaiah and Yahweh will be discussed.

Chapter 6

The traumatic triangle of tension between Ahaz, Isaiah and Yahweh

*For centuries kings, priests and lords have insisted that obedience is a virtue
and that disobedience is a vice.*

Erich Fromm

6.1 Introduction

Does disobedience and disbelief cause trauma? Many people would not hesitate to give a positive confirmation to this question. One just have to read about King Ahaz and his responses to Yahweh's prophetic messages through Isaiah to concur with the question asked that disobedience leads to trauma. There are enough signs, utterances, symbols and metaphors in the text of Isaiah 7 and 8 to sustain such a notion. However, there are other mitigating factors that contribute to the overall aspect of trauma. One cannot jump to this conclusion without taking social influences into consideration. Human beings, due to the complexity of relationships, culture, norms and common understanding form a social reaction and response to trauma and traumatic experiences. Moreover, personal past experiences and positions contribute to aspects such as lack of faith, fearing, anxiety, frustration and disobedience, to name a few. Not only is trauma experienced on a personal level, but also as a collective community when exposed to events such as looming war, threats and the continuous uncertainty of the prophet's utterances, which contains messages of despair and elements of hope that adds to trauma becoming part of everyday life.

The aim of this chapter is to investigate and understand the complex and traumatic relationship between King Ahaz, Isaiah and Yahweh. It is my intention to contemplate the psychological and theological characteristics of trauma that influences this traumatic triangle between the abovementioned role players. I find it necessary not only to identify these traumatic markers,

such as despair and hope that contributes to the tension and conflict in this relationship, but also to indicate possible posttraumatic growth that can follow as a result of these triangle relationships.

This chapter will further argue that to understand the traumatic tension in the relationship between King Ahaz, Isaiah and Yahweh, the roles of the participants in this relationship as read about in Isaiah 7 and 8, must be understood. Therefore, this chapter will address prophecy, kingship and Yahweh's involvement in this tension triangle in the continuous sway of the equilibrium between despair and hope.

6.2 Who is Isaiah?

To understand the intrinsic trauma triangle between Isaiah, King Ahaz and Yahweh, it is necessary to know and understand the role players in this historical drama as it is entertained in Isaiah 7 and 8. The main character in the book is Isaiah whose dynamic prophetic utterances are filled with passion and urge as he warns, instructs, rebukes, soothes and comforts the people of Judah, whether with words of despair or words of hope. Nonetheless, the Book of Isaiah was not written to provide a biography of the prophet, but it is possible to ascertain whom Isaiah was through the few suggestions given in the chapters that provide some personal information. Smith (2007:34) so rightly remarks that the oracles contain very little information about Isaiah's personal life, but what can be learned through the oracles is what the prophet Isaiah believed and said. What I however have picked up while studying various literature, commentaries and the biblical text concerning Isaiah, is that very little is said about his feelings, where he traveled and what his reaction was to what Yahweh was doing in Jerusalem. What was, however, of the utmost importance to Isaiah was to prophecy and convey Yahweh's words and messages of judgment and hope to the king and the people of Judah.

The name 'Isaiah' is derived from the Hebrew name *Yeshayahu*, which means 'Yahweh saves' or 'Yahweh is salvation'. Isaiah was a prophet who lived and worked in Jerusalem from about 750 to 700 BCE, according to Watts (1985:25). Hanke (1997:222) gives a very interesting general overview that suggests firstly that the title of the book originated from the reference in verse 1, 'Isaiah, son of Amoz', and secondly, that the name 'Isaiah' appears a number of times in the book, as well as other parts of the Old Testament. Hanke (1997:223) further postulates that Isaiah is the first of the Major Prophets in the English Bible and the first of the Latter Prophets in the Hebrew Canon. Lastly, Hanke (1997:223) states that the name 'Isaiah' appears 16 times in the body of the book and in the New Testament, Jesus referred to Isaiah at least four times. Isaiah was the son of Amoz and Manley (1995:21) explains that this Amoz was not a reference to the prophet Amos, but an unknown figure. Keil and Delitzch (1969:69) suggest that Amoz might have functioned as a scribe in the king's court, based on a seal found in Jerusalem saying 'Amoz the scribe', which could have been possible. However, Roberts (2015:12) purports that the information about Isaiah's family is not very helpful because many people could have had the name Amoz and furthermore, the seal that was found had no date seal on it, making the person unknown. It is known that Isaiah was married and Smith (2007:35) writes that in Isaiah 8:3 it says that Isaiah's wife was called a prophetess even though there is no evidence that she ever proclaimed any prophetic messages.

Isaiah lived and proclaimed his message in Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. Isaiah was a man of dignity and remarkable courage and Sofer (2008:203) writes that Isaiah received his calling by proclaiming in Isaiah 6:8: 'Here I am; send me'. I believe that is why Isaiah is called the prince of the prophets, because of these unfaltering attributes. Smith (2007) elaborates on this notion that Isaiah was not self-absorbed, but was ministry-absorbed even when he did not know what the nature of Yahweh's calling involved, where he had to go and to whom he had to prophecy to. The attributes of Isaiah are adeptly summarised by Woods (2003:300) as having spiritual status because of his willingness to respond to Yahweh's call and the steadfastness that he

approached King Ahaz with a message of rebuke and salvation. Woods (2003:300) rightfully notes that it took a true sense of obedience, commitment and dedication. Isaiah also felt comfortable at the royal court. That is why Woods (2003:301) states that Isaiah was deeply committed to the royal Davidic tradition, that he had knowledge of the inner life at the royal court and the Judean government. Because of this he was not hesitant to rebuke King Ahaz and to speak about the dangers of the looming threat posed by the Assyrians. Clements (1980:13) elaborates that the Davidic dynasty had a special prominence with Isaiah. Another attribute displayed by Isaiah is his intellectual abilities and Woods (2003:302) postulates that the prophet was one of the intellectuals of his day. This intellectuality was evident as striking features in his prophetic utterances as reflected in Isaiah 8:22: 'And they will look at the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.' Here the drama and the consequences of their disbelief are conveyed in Isaiah's intellectual metaphorical speech. Fohrer (1972:96) believes that throughout Isaiah's life, he had one purpose in mind and that was to prophecy conversion and repentance.

That Isaiah was an outstanding prophet did not surpass me in the literature research conducted for this study. Within the concepts of individual and collective trauma in biblical settings always in mind, I found that Isaiah not only addressed his prophetic utterances at the individual, but also at the people as a collective group. In this regard, Sofer (2008:203) remarks there is a notable resemblance between Isaiah's ideal moral society and the conduct within a society where individual and public virtues are apparent. Therefore, Isaiah refers to the individual and the collective alike without any claim to differentiate between them.

6.2.1 The role of a prophet

The discussion of the role of the prophet aims to inquire into social, religious and political functions of Isaiah and the impact it has on trauma and traumatic experiences. The relationship between Isaiah, King Ahaz, Yahweh and the people of Judah creates the social, political and religious platform for tension, conflict, anxiety, reprimanding, rebuke, encouragement and soothing. These are all classic prototypical trauma stressors that could have negative feelings of despair or positive feelings of hope entrenched in them. Therefore, Isaiah fulfilled the role of a prophet and Smith (2007:40) writes that firstly, he announced the message from Yahweh to the people of Judah, and secondly, Isaiah was a wise counselor of kings and he performed dramatic sign acts through the metaphorical names of Isaiah's children.

6.2.1.1 Prophets and prophecy

The origins of prophetic literature lie in the traumatising events in the narrative of ancient Israel. Prophecy in Israel is a subject matter of which there is little direct information. There are three major terms used in the Old Testament to refer to those people who speak and transmit the word of Yahweh. Hays (2010:25) writes that the most common Hebrew term for such a person is *nabi'* (prophet). Wood (2003:16) writes that the term *nabi'* (*nābhî*) is used nearly three hundred times in the Hebrew Bible in its noun form alone. Because the term *nabi'* is the term that are used the most, Von Rad (2001:7) argues that this makes things 'harder, rather than easier' to understand and clarify the term prophecy. The two other terms, *ro'eh* and *chozeh*, are used less frequently and both these terms are translated as 'seer' which means to 'see'. Bullock (2007:16) explains that the term 'seer' and 'visionary' are descriptive of the individual's experience. The meaning of 'seer' describes the insight that came to the prophet and 'visionary' implied the reception of visions and dreams. It is noteworthy that there is a fourth term, namely 'man of God'. This term is the least used of all the terminology and Wood (2003:17) states that 'it is the phrase "man of God" which simply refers to the prophet as the one who had been chosen and sent by Yahweh.

Blenkinsopp (2000:124) also contributes to the list of terminology related to the term prophecy when he refers to the Deuteronomic scribes' list of eight types of classification in Deuteronomy 18:10-11. The list includes 'practitioner of divination', 'soothsayer', 'auger', 'sorcerer', and 'caster of spells', 'one who consults ghosts', 'medium' and 'one who consults the dead'. It is further postulated by Blenkinsopp (2000:125) that, according to the Deuteronomists, the prophet is also elevated from a peripheral location in society to the status of a spokesman for a central morality religion. Grabbe (1995:83) alludes that 'the individuals recognised as prophets in the text show a wide diversity of activity and characteristics.'

The prophet's roles were diverse and a typical statement in a standard history of Israelite religion that ought to be quoted in full is the following statement by Fohrer (1972:99):

More important than the professional prophets – indeed, second only to Moses in importance for the history of Yahwism – is the small group comprising the great individual prophets, including Amos and Hosea, Isaiah and Micah, Zephaniah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel and, in Deutero-Isaiah. They did not exercise their prophetic ministry as members of a profession but on the basis of a special calling that snatched them from their original profession. In them, Israelite prophecy reached its summit and, although they are lumped with other forms under the common heading of 'prophecy', there is more that distinguishes them rather than link them to these forms. They came forward among their people not as members of a guild or a class, not as representatives of a tribe or clan, not as functionaries of a sanctuary or the king, but as conscious representatives and messengers of God.

Although the Hebrew prophets in some ways resemble the divine knowledge, Matthews (2001:19) writes that biblical writers portray them rather as religious practitioners. Nissinen (2016:5) explains that in modern languages prophecy

relates to a prediction of future events and the term prophet depicts a person who are able to predict future occurrences.

6.2.2 Isaiah – Yahweh's messenger

With Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve, Isaiah is known as one of the Major Prophets. McEntire (2015:8) writes that the prophetic scrolls of Isaiah, shows a general sense of movement from negative to positive, and this movement is observed in the kinds of literature found within the Book of Isaiah. Two social locations, according to McEntire (2015:16) identify the prophet's role: centre and periphery. Centre prophets have an established position in society and are able to play a political role, while a periphery prophet is without power and stands for social reform in a society. Isaiah is a central prophet because his prophecies addressed both the needs of the people of Judah and the fears of King Ahaz. Smith (1998:123) writes Isaiah's vocabulary reflected knowledge of the 'temple, wisdom, covenant, and royal ideology.

As an orator, Isaiah also used imaginative metaphors, subtle allusions and double meanings.' Isaiah functioned as a prophet by delivering oracles. In Isaiah 7 and 8, some of Isaiah's critical utterances were about the political situation in Judah and how King Ahaz's disbelief influenced the outcome of the political situation. De Jong (2007:345) writes that several of the symbolic acts conducted by the prophet were done to emphasise his oracle to especially the King Ahaz. Prophecy was essentially an oral performance and Na'aman (2008:64) believes this oral performance was the way in which Yahweh spoke discretely into the mouths of the prophets. Only then was the message 'interpreted' and given to the 'object' that was usually the king.

Another interesting assumption made by Na'aman (2008:65) is the calmness that the prophet portrayed in situations of real threat, as well as the confidence Isaiah had in Yahweh. Had there not been an immediate threat to the king or the city, the oracle given by the prophet would not have had any distinct meaning or message for King Ahaz or the people of Judah. One also

gathers from De Jong (2007:342) that during moments of national importance, the prophetic function was encouragement by announcing divine support to King Ahaz and the nation of Judah. This announcement of encouragement usually went together with a proclamation of destruction of the enemy of Judah. Barton (2003:28) writes that because Isaiah had ready access to King Ahaz, he also delivered divine criticism to remind King Ahaz of his duties and to announce specific disasters to befall the nation of Judah as is evident in Isaiah 7 and 8. Hays (2010:98) postulates that the three-point pre-exilic message is a good synthesis for Isaiah's message: a) you have broken the covenant through idolatry, social injustice and religious ritualism, therefore repent, b) If you do not repent, judgment will come on the nation and c) yet there is hope beyond judgment for a glorious future restoration for Judah.

Sweeney (1996:15) has identified two social settings of importance in Isaiah's prophecy, the temple and the royal court. This is not accidental and Sweeney (1996:15) explains that the temple and the king constitute the two most important and fundamental institutions of Judah. The king and the temple are interlinked, because generally the king founded and supported the temple, and the temple 'legitimised' the king that signifies Yahweh's promise to the house of David. Now, in my opinion, these are, in the case of King Ahaz, grounds for severe conflict and reasons for trauma stressors and experiences to commence. The motivation for my assertion can be found in Isaiah 7:2b: 'the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as trees of the forest shake before the wind.' And in Isaiah 8:19: 'And when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God?' In Isaiah 7:2b, King Ahaz showed his fear and disbelief in Yahweh's promise to the house of David and in Isaiah 8:19, King Ahaz and the people of Judah denounced the temple as a place to seek Yahweh and found refuge, but they rather placed their trust in necromancy and the dead, and most probably adding to the frustration of Isaiah and the judgment of Yahweh.

These social settings and interlaced communication or lack of it, increased the emotional burden on Isaiah, the disobedience of King Ahaz and the lack of faith of the people of Judah, making a social experience a traumatic experience of desolation and despair. The challenge now is to understand if the prophet Isaiah prophesied salvation or judgment or both? Stromberg (2011:107) assumes three possible viewpoints that can be summarised as follows: 1) Isaiah preached destruction and salvation, 2) Isaiah exhorted his audience to repentance, announcements of judgments scaring them and words of salvation directing them to repent, and 3) Isaiah can be seen as a prophet of hope and salvation. De Jong (2007:14) writes that most scholars, as being part of Isaiah's prophetic utterances have accepted the joint occurrence of judgment and salvation. I concur, especially on the notion of Isaiah 7 and 8, and the significance of the metaphorical names of Isaiah's sons, whom symbolises judgment and salvation in their implications. This aspect will be deliberated in the following chapter to explain the trauma tendencies and potential posttraumatic growth options of these symbolic acts.

6.3 Ahaz – a king denounced

The historical records do not paint a pretty picture of King Ahaz, the king of Judah. Sweeney (2007:380) writes that Isaiah 7:1-9:6 accounts Isaiah's encounter with King Ahaz and describes King Ahaz as a sinful monarch who rejected the protection offered by Yahweh to him. Sweeney (2007:378) also refers to II Kings 16 where it states that Ahaz was 20 years old when he reigned and he ruled for 16 years in Jerusalem, but most importantly he did not do what was right in the eyes of Yahweh. When one reads Isaiah 7:1-9:6, according to Leach (2013:159), King Ahaz is described as fearful and faithless. These are symptoms, that when it is prolonged, leads to numbness of thought, denial, disbelief and avoidance of situations based on the classification system of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DMS-V-TR)*.

Even the prophet Isaiah reduces King Ahaz in standing. What is noticeable is that Isaiah never refers to him as 'King Ahaz'. Prokhorov (2015:96) mentions that all other royal figures are mentioned in Isaiah 7, and this includes the foreign and deceased ones but not Ahaz. On this view, Seitz (1993:68) writes that he was never afforded the title 'king', but he was consistently referred to under the broader rubric, namely 'the house of David' in Isaiah 7:2 and 13. Another interesting point made by Prokhorov (2015:96) is that just like Isaiah, Ahaz is only mentioned by name. This detail is of importance because in II Kings 16, King Ahaz is repeatedly described as a reigning individual. Seitz (1993:68) further postulates that on two occasions Ahaz is referred to together with 'his people', in Isaiah 7:2 and 7:17. In Isaiah 7:17 'there is a prediction of judgment, upon you (Ahaz) and upon your people and upon your father's house'.

Another important aspect of the denouncement of the personality of King Ahaz is his action record and here Prokhorov (2015:96) states that the narrative portrays Ahaz as completely stagnant where his reactions are either based on emotion (verse 2) or with reservation (verse 12), and this almost stoic action stand in complete disparity with the figure of Yahweh, which are described as abundant in 'dynamism'.

Prokhorov (2015:97) also draws a comparison between Isaiah 7 and II Kings 16 in the denouncing of King Ahaz's character. He states that the text in Isaiah 7 strips the king of having any initiative or power, whereas II Kings 16 condemns his actions of faithlessness. In my view this inactivity on the part of King Ahaz contributed commencement of his own personal trauma stressor, as well as the frustrations that Isaiah felt, but mostly the traumatic experiences that the people of Judah had to endure. In Isaiah 7:12, Ahaz's actions of distrust are described as follows: 'But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the tests."' When reading the text through a trauma lens, self-de-integration and disillusionment can lead to a loss of identity. Miller-Karas (2015:17) explains that 'it is an individual perception of an event as threatening to oneself.' A case can be made that Ahaz's perception of the event (his action, or lack thereof) was threatening and daunting to his ability to

make faith-based decisions. Isaiah 7:17 presents the Assyrian threat where King Ahaz and his dynasty are the object of disaster to follow.

As a political leader, King Ahaz was also not held in high esteem. Thomas (2008:172) writes that the Isaiah tradition describes Ahaz as a 'bad king' based on his foreign policy decision-making skills. He was seen as a faithless ruler who did not trust in Yahweh for his own and Judah's security. Thomas (2008:173) further explains that the reason why Isaiah was opposed to Ahaz's foreign policy was because he knew that power politics would not resolve the Syro-Ephraimite threat or the possible Assyrian invasion, and neither could this policy guarantee the safety of the people of Judah. Isaiah understood politics and Thomas (2008:173) states that this was precisely the reason why Isaiah expected of King Ahaz to trust in Yahweh's covenantal relationship with Judah. A last summation made by Prokhorov (2015:97) is that the narrative in Isaiah 7 and 8 identifies King Ahaz with the crowd, while relationships between King Ahaz, Isaiah and in a sense the people of Judah, influenced the relationship with Yahweh, making Isaiah's prophecies at times oracles of despair and at other times, oracles of hope – a continuous traumatic emotional sway.

6.4 Yahweh the covenant God

Isaiah calls Yahweh 'holy, holy, holy' in Isaiah 6 and in juxtaposition hereto, Ahaz in Isaiah 7:12 states that he will not ask and test Yahweh's promise to him and the people of Judah. The tangible tension between Isaiah and King Ahaz rested on this collocation of belief and disbelief, obedience and disobedience, and trust and a lack of trust in Yahweh. Prokhorov (2015:97) states 'that in contrast to King Ahaz's passivity, Yahweh is presented as a determined actor' in the conversation between himself, Isaiah and the king. The whole interaction started when Yahweh send Isaiah to meet with King Ahaz. Prokhorov (2015:97) makes a clever summation of Yahweh's direct involvement with the king, the people of Judah and Isaiah and précis as: The Yahweh's communication style is verbal and non-verbal, and it is visual and audible. He does not only speak to the individual, but to the collective group as well. In Isaiah 7:14, Yahweh presents a sign and it is done in the same

context of other sign accounts given directly from him. What makes the sign omen in verse 14 remarkable is the human protection as Yahweh-given sign and Yahweh is in control as an all-sufficient deity. In verse 17, Yahweh's direct involvement is being portrayed as him whistling to insects. Most interestingly Yahweh is here portrayed as the One responsible for destruction brought about by the Assyrians, and this stands in stark contrast with verse 14 that states 'God is with us'. However, King Ahaz is compared to an inert entity who is being ridiculed by the Assyrians in verse 20. The mere fact that Yahweh controls this situation enlarges his image of sovereignty, and in my opinion, the contrasting images of Yahweh's involvement with the people of Judah enhanced and polarised the traumatic experience, whether as despair or hope.

Davies (2000:173) proposes a very different viewpoint of Yahweh's intent and involvement with the king and people of Judah. In a way, he postulates that Yahweh's involvement or judgment is directly responsible for the trauma that occurs for the nation and he based his assumption in on the call of Isaiah in chapter 6: 9-13:

9 And he said, "Go, and say to this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.'

10 Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

11 Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste,

12 and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

13 And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled." The holy seed is its stump.'

Davies (2000:173) defends his opinion by saying that the most obvious interpretation of this text is that Yahweh has instructed Isaiah that through his utterance, it will become extremely difficult for the people of Judah to return to Yahweh in repentance. In this regard, Prokhorov (2015:112) writes that

especially in chapter 7, Yahweh's kingship is underlined and surpassing that of King Ahaz to show that he, Yahweh, is in control of every event affecting Judah, its wealth and security, for the better or for the worse. A further point made by Prokhorov (2015:112) that in a sense agree with that of Davies is when he states that 'mighty emperors are mere tools of his power; so that his persona comes close to what may be called an all-subsuming hero.' Prokhorov's (2015:113) assumption is made to enlarge the almightiness of Yahweh and to emphasise the weakness of King Ahaz as someone who is fearful and anxious. If this is the case, then the question can be asked if King Ahaz did not become fearful because Yahweh already knew that there would be judgment for Judah? I believe this matter is not this clear cut, but that the response action from the king and the people of Judah created a cause and effect syndrome that Yahweh observed to serve judgment and salvation. A case is, however, made for the fact that Yahweh could elicit trauma upon the king and his people. In this regard, Davies (2000:176) refers to the 'remnant' oracle in Isaiah 7 and he states that 'for a remnant to remain, the majority must have been done away with. It is difficult to see how this can ultimately be a comforting thought to the majority'. I agree with Davies that the enormity of this distress on the people of Judah must have been unbearable, but not in the sense that Yahweh is the only one responsible therefore, but on the notion that the hardening and disobedience catapulted the trauma experience and trauma stressor into a prolonged traumatic suffering occurrence.

The prophetic messages embedded in the symbolic names of *Shear-jashub*, *Immanuel* and *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz* from Yahweh to king Ahaz and the people of Judah, suggests a religious argument and that is that Yahweh's promises are contained in these oracles: that a remnant shall return, Yahweh will be with the people of Judah and that the enemies of Judah will not succeed even if they plunder, because Yahweh provides the hope and salvation.

6.5 The traumatic triangle of tension

The most common source of conflict between kings and prophets of Judah was the question of faithful obedience. The question that could be asked is if Yahweh directed the faithful behaviour of the people of Judah through the decisions the king made or through what was spoken through the prophetic utterances of the prophet? Holland (2009:226)³⁷ postulates that 'prophets tended to represent a nonconforming view of Yahweh based on divine authority.' The conflict between King Ahaz and Isaiah started during the Syro-Ephraimite war over whether or not to seek an alliance with Assyria against Israel and Syria. Isaiah gave King Ahaz numerous reassurances from Yahweh that Judah would prevail if King Ahaz would trust in Yahweh. Holland (2009:227), however, writes that King Ahaz was more driven by practical considerations of royal politics and therefore rather chose the Assyrians for protections. Another interesting detail is that the tension between Isaiah and King Ahaz was permuted by the fact that usually the sequence of Yahweh's communication, according to Prokhorov (2015:104), is with individuals, firstly in Isaiah 7:3, to Isaiah and then only to King Ahaz in Isaiah 7:10. This could imply that after King Ahaz decided to choose the path of politics and not of faith, Yahweh addressed King Ahaz directly where he failed dismally again to trust Yahweh's promise to the Davidic house.

I am of the opinion that a stressful political environment could pre-empt trauma stressors, not only for King Ahaz but also the nation and the frustration levels of the prophet too. An interesting perception given by Resick (2014:102) is that pre-trauma variables such as continuous threat of war, fear, heightened anxiety in conflict situations and possible looming disaster, can serve as risk factors for the development of trauma stressors and posttraumatic stress. Isaiah 7:4 already attests that King Ahaz was fearful and that he was experiencing some form of anxiety and tension as the verse reads, 'do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint ...' In Isaiah 8, the attention is on the people of Judah and the threat from Yahweh is made in

³⁷ Holland (2009:227) also writes that the conflict between political realities and theological idealism almost always results in the death of the ideal of the prophetic proclamation.

verse 8: 'And it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land.' The trauma that was spurred onto the people of Judah did not only come from their enemies but also from Yahweh creating panic, fear and communal disparity. The pre-trauma variables flung the nation of Judah into despair, darkness and a brooding storm where hope and salvation seemed quite impossible at that time.

Resick (2014:105) also identifies peritraumatic stressors which implies all the factors that occur during a traumatic event. Here subjective distress can become predicative fear reactions and direct threats to one's safety and survival results in dissociation and an inability to deal rationally with decision making. The presence of the children *Shear-jashub* and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* are firmly linked to Yahweh's presence in the lives of the people of Judah and the significance of their metaphorical meaning becomes a peri-traumatic stressor of what is to come, heightening the waiting effect within the traumatic experience. The glimmer of hope is found in the return of the remnant, urging the king and people to turn back to Yahweh, but through their reluctance, they inadvertently create their own peri-traumatic stressors.

Another very important factor mentioned by Resick (2014:109) is an acquaintanceship status, which implies the relationship with the perpetrator or that which holds a threat. In the case of Isaiah 7 and 8, this indicates to the submission of King Ahaz to the Assyrians and the deal that he made with Tiglath-pileser, the Assyrian king, for his protection. Because of this acquaintance, self-doubt occurs and this is where King Ahaz and the people of Judah again relied on the help from the mediums and necromancers instead of being steadfast in their faith.

The people of Judah and King Ahaz through their practices of witchcraft, edged a further wedge between themselves and Yahweh, their saviour, and created self-inflicted trauma through disbelief, emotional suffering and misery. There is a tension link between trust in Yahweh and the holiness of Yahweh, something the Judean people and especially King Ahaz failed to comprehend

within their involvement with necromancy. Goldingay (2014:26) writes that Yahweh's unique power and deity in combination with his commitment to Judah through his promise to the Davidic house, means that he could and should be trusted. To turn to other sources of affirmation is to insult Yahweh's holiness, and this disbelief created tension between Isaiah and King Ahaz, but with Yahweh as well.

On the case in point of Ahaz's request for assistance from the Assyrians, Na'aman (2008:67) writes that it is remarkable that Isaiah was not explicitly criticising this request. Isaiah must have regarded this request as an unavoidable act. One would have assumed that this would have been the offset point for their relationship. However, Na'aman (2008:67) states that they did agree on all the details of King Ahaz's political and personal choices. Severe tension between King Ahaz and Isaiah was initiated because of King Ahaz's distrust in Yahweh's guidance and promises. And the reason for this tension point was the vast difference in responsibility between the king and the prophet Isaiah concerning the strategy chosen. The lack of trust and anxiety is here closely tied to decision-making responsibility that seemed to elude King Ahaz.

6.6 Summary

A notable theme in Isaiah 7 and 8 is the traumatic tension triangle between King Ahaz, Isaiah and Yahweh. This chapter tried to indicate the role players in these two chapters and how their relationships with one another contributed to the trauma within the corpus. A literature and commentary study was undertaken to determine whom the prophet Isaiah was. It was alluded that he was a man of courageous demeanour and also that his faith in Yahweh was solid and undeterred. The impact that his prophetic utterance had on the tension between the relationships in the narratives was evident in his oracles, as well as the signs that were given through the names of his children. Even though he was Yahweh's vessel through which Yahweh spoke to King Ahaz and the people of Judah, it was evident that Isaiah also suffered the trauma

stressors in the text because of the disbelief and disobedience displayed by King Ahaz and the people of Judah. He must have felt frustrated and disheartened at times because of the lack of trust on the part of King Ahaz.

Isaiah's prophecy was discussed with close reference to trauma markers and stressors within the units of Isaiah 7 and 8. Here again, King Ahaz's distrust, inability to make decisions even when Yahweh speaks directly to him and his rejection of numerous metaphorical signs, contributed to the tension between Isaiah's prophecies, King Ahaz and the audience that these prophecies was aimed at. The aspect of judgment and salvation was also entertained in the tension triangle and it was ascertained that even though despair was most prominent, hope was also evident in Isaiah's prophecy. The perception of hope as a posttraumatic growth experience will be fully discussed in the following chapter.

The main character in Isaiah 7 and 8, King Ahaz, as well as the Judean nation, was conferred in the tension triangle. The role player, King Ahaz, is implicated as an anti-pole of Isaiah. He is seen as fearful, anxious, sceptical and most importantly as disbelieving. History does not treat him well and he is portrayed as a weakling and inferior in stature in comparison to the prophet Isaiah. King Ahaz's decision-making skills directly, and indirectly, resulted in trauma for himself and the people of Judah.

Various scholarly opinions were studied to determine Yahweh's involvement with Judah and if he caused the trauma events through the prophecy of Isaiah. It was, however, determined that it is a cause and effect situation where disbelief prompted judgment and despair, but the promise Yahweh made to the Davidic house was imminent in the significance of the names of Isaiah's children, that there will be salvation and hope for Judah in the future. The significance of Isaiah's children's names as possible trauma markers will be entertained in the following chapter.

Lastly, the traumatic tension triangle was examined in this chapter. The aim was to identify certain aspects within the role players that enhanced the conflict and tension through the oracles of Isaiah. It was established that pre-trauma variables, peri-traumatic stressors and acquaintanceship status played an important role in the traumatic tension triangle between King Ahaz, Isaiah and Yahweh, because not only did it identify the stressors, but it also highlighted the intricate and complex nature of Isaiah 7 and 8 as possible trauma literature. An attempt will be made in the next chapter to read the names of Isaiah's sons through a trauma lens.

Chapter 7

Reading the metaphorical names of Isaiah's children through the lens of trauma

Remember your name. Do not lose hope – what you seek will be found.

Neil Gaiman

7.1 Introduction

Trauma involves intense suffering. Normally, trauma is not fully understood at the time that it occurs, but the repeated exposure to the possibility thereof, makes the tension unbearable and enduring. For the people of Judah in 735-732 BCE, as a pre-exilic nation, the endless threat of war, of demise and of devastation, created a traumatic climate. They lived with this looming threat as an individual and as a community day after day. I would therefore like to coin this unremitting premise to trauma stressors – the waiting effect- as my own definition. As a people, including King Ahaz and the prophet Isaiah, they were constantly waiting for something to happen, whether it was good or bad. Also, the decisions that were made during the waiting effect had a real impact on their trauma levels and the way they responded to it. Isaiah's prophecies, Yahweh's promises and King Ahaz's response played a central part as to how the equilibrium would tip between despair and hope.

Recently, more has been written on the topic of trauma and the aftereffects of traumatic occurrences. Especially in Old Testament studies the focus is mostly on the exile and post-exile periods. Very little, if any, is written on the pre-exilic period in the Old Testament before the time of the Babylonian domination. This is a hiatus that this study and particularly this chapter will address.

The use of trauma as a tool or lens to understand and investigate biblical texts, is a new and exciting prospect in biblical studies, even though this type

of approach is fairly new and still have to be theoretically developed. Hence, it is important to view trauma theory not only as a method of interpretation but also as a frame of reference that can yield interesting results. For this reason the use of trauma as an interpretive lens of understanding begins with the application of psychological insights to study research biblical texts. To echo the perspectives of scholars such as Garber (2015:25), Smith-Christopher (2011:256) and Becker (2014:15), the reading of biblical texts through trauma studies, results in a close and critical reading so that the text can be treated with sensitivity, because it is part of the human condition and social structure. The underlying texts are social, political, cultural and religious understandings that influences trauma as a process. Trauma is a process that is shaped through individual and collective group experiences. Thus, it is the aim of this chapter not solely to focus on trauma and the trauma traits, but also to investigate if, within the traumatic experience, posttraumatic growth can prevail.

In this chapter, I would like to explore the metaphorical meaning and trauma implication of the name giving of Isaiah's sons, namely *Shear-jashub* and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, as well as the sign of Immanuel within the symbolism context and not as an eschatological phenomenon. To be able to understand the metaphorical meaning and to grasp the concept thereof, reading the biblical text through a trauma lens will require identifying constructive metaphorical themes and trauma markers contained in the names as aspects of traumatising.

In addressing these themes, the chapter will focus on the following texts:

- Isaiah 7:3ff: 'And the Lord said to Isaiah: "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son."'
- Isaiah 7:14: 'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.'

- Isaiah 8:1: 'The Lord said to me, "Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters, "Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz."'"

A few aspects of trauma need to be considered when reading these verses in Isaiah 7 and 8. The constant threat and exposure to trauma disrupts not only the individuals' wellbeing, but also the social fibre within a collective group. Firstly, the waiting effect of trauma influences lives, identities, social networks and the political climate. Secondly, according to Caruth (2016:18), trauma is characterised through the use of metaphors, overstated speech and emotional language. Lastly, trauma as an individual or collective dimension, constitute resilience aspects that can contribute to posttraumatic growth. (Caruth 2016:18). These trauma elements will be compared to the name giving metaphors in the text. The metaphorical implications will be measured against the meaning and definition of a metaphor, the possibility of a trauma metaphor and the significance of a name in biblical times, with special reference to Isaiah 7 and 8, to address the reading of the metaphorical names of Isaiah's sons through a trauma lens.

7.2 Understanding metaphors

How great is the debt owed to metaphor by those who, knowing what they want to say, wish to illuminate and vivify it.

H.W. Fowler

Given the powerful, dissident and persuasive nature of a metaphor, biblical scholars would do well to pay serious attention to the use of the metaphor in the biblical texts. The whole Bible, but in particular the Old Testament, is full of metaphorical references of messages from Yahweh, not only to his people but to depict events as well. Within the biblical scope, metaphors, according to Brown (2007:142), are a very effective form of communication because it can communicate when literal expressions fall short of doing so. A metaphor also can reorganise our thoughts, introducing associations and assumptions that

we would have perhaps not ourselves have imagined. Such an understanding of a metaphor is central to this exploration, which is concerned with the metaphorical meaning of the name giving of Isaiah's sons in Isaiah 7 and 8. For many people, including biblical scholars, a metaphor is sometimes seen as a characteristic of language or a matter of words within a sentence construction and not as a thought of action. Therefore, it is firstly important to comprehend the definition and theories of a metaphor before attempting to understand a metaphor within the biblical sense.

7.2.1 Metaphorical theories and definition

It is important for this chapter that a brief synopsis of the metaphorical theories and definitions is given. This will later be beneficial in the understanding of the name giving of Isaiah's sons.

To understand a metaphor can be as difficult and complex as to try to understand the book of Isaiah. Jindo (2010:xiii) defines a metaphor as a mode of expression, whereby one thing (A) is understood and described in terms of another (B).

The tradition of interpretation can be traced back to the writings of Aristotle. Jindo (2010:3) and Doyle (2000:57) writes that although what Aristotle meant, is much debated, he is usually regarded as a major advocate of the rhetorical concept of metaphor, where the content can be extracted from the metaphor and re-expressed in a literal way.

Aristotle's proposals represent, according to Baumann (2003:28), the so-called 'substitution theory', which supposes that in metaphors something is labelled by a different word for which a more defined word could be substituted. Baumann (2003:28) argues that Aristotle's assumption is very

narrow in its usage, because here the metaphor is expressed as a stylistic figure that could just as well have been expressed in conceptual language.

In the ground-breaking work that has been done on metaphors by Ricoeur (1977:12)³⁸, he states that a metaphor has a unique structure, but it has two functions, namely a rhetorical and poetic function. Ricoeur (1977:13) further explains that the rhetorical function has no hidden word-play meaning, but aims to define and to find proof.

In a further development, Moughtin-Mumby (2008:4) writes that the approach to metaphorical interpretation can be split into two approaches because it cuts across the breath of the humanities. The one side is those with a substitutionary understanding and the rest with an interactive approach. Moughtin-Mumby (2008:4) further denotes that substitutionary theories tend to coincide with the belief that metaphorical language is 'decorative' or 'ornamental', meaning that a metaphor can be translated as a 'substitution' for a more literal word or phrase. An example that is given is the following: 'Debs is a gazelle' could be seen as 'Debs is like a gazelle' or even 'Debs is graceful', without a loss of meaning of the metaphorical meaning. The metaphorical assumption of Moughtin-Mumby (2008:4) is based on the earlier work of Black (1966:8), who summarised the substitutionary theory as belonging to the sphere of rhetoric and not to the sphere of semantics, because a metaphor's purpose is to divert or to reverse the metaphorical term with a literal word.

Another approach to the understanding of a metaphor is a cognitive approach, which implies that a metaphor cannot be translated by 'substituting' it for another word. This implies that the connotations adjoining any metaphorical word or phrase, according to Moughtin-Mumby (2008:4), is inherent to its meaning and as a cognitive devise it 'creates' meaning and it lends perspective insights and understanding. I concur with Moughtin-Mumby's

³⁸ Ricoeur (1977:28) further demotes that 'labels' transferred to new objects can resist the transfer and therefore there is a relationship between the two elements. The original work of Ricoeur was in French in 1975 and only translated into English in 1977.

assumption that any paraphrasing or replacing of words and phrases will lead to the loss or misinterpretation of cognitive intent. On the cognitive feature, Soslke (1989:31) denotes that a metaphor then has a 'new vision' and it does not enhance the old, but it focuses on the similarities and the dissimilarities and in a sense, it is the combining of old words, heard before, into new ways to create new meanings in the current situation.

The primary work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980:5) on metaphors define it as follows: '... the essence of a metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.' Here they imply that one metaphor leads to many other metaphorical concepts. In the latest work by Lakoff and Johnson they postulate that the theory of a metaphor has come a long way and that the key ideas for the understanding of metaphors are the following:

- Metaphors are fundamentally conceptual in nature; metaphorical language is secondary.
- Conceptual metaphors are grounded in everyday experiences.
- Abstract thought is unavoidable, ubiquitous, and mostly unconscious.
- Abstract concepts have a literal core but are extended by metaphors, often by many mutually inconsistent metaphors.
- Abstract concepts are not complete without metaphors. For example, love is not love without metaphors or magic, attraction, madness, union, nurturance, and so on (2003:271).³⁹

The complexity of a metaphor can be defined in the simplicity of a definition that I believe defines the essence and intricacy of the term – a metaphor is a shift, a carrying over of a word from its normal use to a new abstract use. (Richards 2014:220).

³⁹ In the work of Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, an afterword with new research was added to the 1980 edition. Both the 1980 and the 2003 editions were used in this chapter.

7.2.2 Biblical metaphor

Since the 1970s, the focus has been directed towards literary components to understand the biblical metaphor. But the more recent works of Alter (1981), Landy (2001) and Weiss (2006) played an important role in the literary approach where an analysis of biblical metaphors was developed. Another significant metaphor definition given by Alter (1981:8), is that a metaphor is powerful language and it has the power to 'break open closed frames of reference to make us see things with a shock of new recognition.' The work of Gitay (2007:106) places a specific relationship between the form and the content. This would indicate the connection between the rhetorical devices and the divine messages. Gitay (2007:107) refers to Isaiah 6:1 as a case in point when he explains that the metaphor of social collapse is counteracted by the divine stability of Yahweh sitting on the throne, that can be seen as a metaphor of power and control. Landy (2001:276) makes a clever assumption when she states that metaphors fill gaps, meaning the gaps that are present between one self and others, and between 'body' and 'thing', and that Yahweh inserts himself into the human world through metaphors, just as he does through prophecy for his voice to be heard. Landy (2001:377) further explain that metaphor clarifies, illustrates and establishes connections between remote objects and the text in the bible.

Doyle (2000:151)⁴⁰ writes that many biblical commentators seem to treat metaphors as not that important but as one among many figurative uses of language. Such an approach tends to lack the conviction that metaphors can express truths, often with respect to abstract concepts, which cannot be otherwise expressed. Van Hecke (2005:2) makes an interesting observation regarding metaphors in the biblical text, firstly by stating that there are different approaches to the phenomenon of the metaphor where they either complement one another or challenges the audience perspectives. What Van

⁴⁰ Doyle (2000:152) writes that the study of the metaphor in general linguistics is still developing.

Hecke (2005: 2) implies herewith is that there needs to be consideration for the 'tenors (that about what is spoken in the metaphor)' and the 'vehicles (the image used to say something about the tenor)' of the metaphors. A further valid point made by Van Hecke (2005:2) which is rather important for this study, is the notion that as far as 'tenors' are concerned, almost all responses are partly or wholly devoted to metaphors of Yahweh, but also metaphors about the enemies and metaphors for the self, which I believe may be the individual or the collective group. The 'vehicle' of the metaphors in the case of Isaiah 7 and 8 can be treated as the names given to the children, and the tenors in these chapters can be seen as Yahweh, the remnants and the enemies of Judah. These notions will be investigated in this chapter.

The work of Macky (1990) is in agreement with the work of Bourguet (1987)⁴¹ and Stienstra (1993) and all three authors, according to Van Hecke (2005:51), focused on the fact that biblical authors did not only set out to communicate ideas, but they also had a rhetorical purpose and desire to move and change and influence the reader/listener. The study of Macky (1990:57) states that he based his biblical metaphorical assumption of understand on what the writers were meaning or trying to say and imagine when they spoke or wrote the metaphor. In Van Hecke (2005:43), Bourguet agrees with Stienstra and Macky, but offers a more explicit reference to this aspect of the analysis. According to Bourguet (Van Hecke 2005:43), one of the most characteristic aspects of a metaphor is that it seeks to create a certain shock in that it 'leads to the insertion of a term from one particular isotope into another isotope where it does not, strictly speaking, belong.' The 'shock' that Bourguet (Van Hecke 2005:49) refers to is either immediate or mediate. The mediating metaphor can be interpreted as a 'long metaphor' and indicates a formal metaphor, which is important to recognise a metaphor in a given text.

⁴¹ Bourguet's (1987) work is written in French and the translation of this book *Des métaphores de Jérémie*, is taken out of the scholarly works of Van Hecke (2005) and Foreman (2001) as the work of Bourguet is deemed important in metaphor understanding and analyses.

MacCormac (1976:61) concurs with Bourguet (Van Hecke 2005:9) when he states: 'A metaphor can be best characterised by the "tension" or surprise it causes in the hearer by means of its absurdity.' Bourguet in Foreman (2011:28) makes it very clear that the metaphor does not seek concealment at all. This is most probably a statement with which Macky would not agree with as the hidden message, or the concealed message, is at the forefront for him.

Macky (1990:77) points out in his work that skills and tools are necessary for the exploration of the metaphor in the biblical text. This is important for the ultimate interpretation of the metaphor. He presents seven basic skills. For me, the problem however is that he only focused on the speaker's meaning without taking the users' significance into consideration. According to Macky (1990:38-47), these skills entail:

- Participant knowing:
This is a process whereby we immerse ourselves in a reality, to be able to know it. Such an approach to a metaphor opens its mysterious dimension.
- Imagining: creative and re-creative:
According to Macky this skill is at the heart of processing metaphors that are read or heard. The creator of the metaphor uses a word, which he believes the 'audience' will have some direct knowledge of to be able to re-create the reality behind the word.
- Concrete and abstract speaking and thinking:
Concrete speech is seen as an immediate experienced reality and abstract is more conceptual and related to definitions of reality. He states that biblical metaphors tend to be more concrete and express an immediate experience of God, sin or salvation.
- Multiple purposes of speaking:
Macky explains the multiple levels of speech as –
 - Presentative (communicate information, arguments, conclusions)

- Expressive (express feelings without affecting other)
 - Evaluative (express judgment of an event or thing)
 - Performative (has an immediate effect such as promises, proclamations)
 - Dynamic (intend to change others through emotions, enlightenment and change of attitude)
 - Exploratory (giving an illustration)
 - Relational (evoking a personal response)
- Meaning: the hidden heart of speaking
Macky states that to be able to interpret a speech, there are clues hidden in the speaker's words. What this mean with regards to biblical metaphors, is that metaphors must be seen in context and not in isolation.
 - Understanding: reconstructing the speaker's meaning
This is a process of receiving and duplicating in a sense, the meaning of the speaker. The broader context of the message of the speaker should be taken into consideration.
 - Explaining the speaker's meaning
It is a process clearing away obstacles in order to get a clearer perspective on the meaning of communication.

These seven tools, although not without flaws, can allow us some access and understanding of biblical metaphors, and this research endeavour, regarding the significance in the name giving of Isaiah's sons and as possible trauma markers, will utilise some of the tools.

In a further effort to understand the metaphor, Jindo (2010:222) shed some light on the basic research patterns and he refers to the various works of scholars that were studied, such as Adler, Childs and Weiss. Jindo (2010:222) identifies four main patterns of research:

- Theory-oriented pattern:

This pattern applies theoretical models to analyse biblical metaphors. The phenomenon of the metaphor is examined with a careful consideration of other major theories of metaphor. Jindo (2010:223) states that their scope of interest includes the relationship between the thought and language of the biblical religion, and the role that the metaphor plays within the biblical thinking sphere.

- Metaphor-oriented pattern:

This research pattern explores the conceptual world of the biblical religion and its history rather than the understanding of the role that the metaphor plays within the composition.

- Method-oriented pattern:

This pattern aims to develop an exegetical method that would enhance our understanding of metaphors in a literary context. Carasik (2006:85) further elaborates on this pattern when he suggests three exegetical principles regarding metaphors. These principles are: a) Its ramifications. Here he discerns the secondary meaning of a given image and the connotations it evokes from its primary contextual meaning. He uses the example of 'fire' and the different reader responses such as 'anger', 'divine presence' or 'purification'. b) Its specific concept refers to the specific of the imagery. Here the metaphors are used in a very precised and concentrated way. c) Its intertextual function means to read a passage and to see how the author plays with the traditional knowledge associated with the image and how it enhances the meaning of it.

- Test-oriented pattern:

Jindo (2010:224) writes that it is very important to take into consideration that a work of literature represents its own reality and the reader reconstructs it by sorting and linking elements within the text. The conclusion that can be drawn is that the semantic unit of elements is not always identical with the syntactic unit. The reader must therefore actively integrate elements to reconstruct a plot, framework and personality of characters to form a bigger picture or unity.

Intertwined in this labyrinth of different theories and patterns, cognitive approaches add another dimension to the metaphorical equation. Moughtin-Mumby (2008:5) clarifies that 'cognitive approaches are adamant that metaphor cannot be translated; metaphor is not simply a substitution for another word, and any paraphrase will always result in a loss of cognitive content.' It is clear that the connotation is intrinsic to its meaning and cannot be differentiated from.

The work of Stienstra (1993:7) indicates a three-step approach: a) Establish a theory of metaphor to allow one to analyse a metaphor in the text. b) Show that this approach is significant for interpreting the metaphor especially with respect to the culture and society from which it emerged. c) Show that the approach has significance for the translation of a metaphor. Stienstra (1993:8) validates her theory when she proposes the following definition for the metaphor: 'metaphor is primarily a cognitive phenomenon rather than an exclusively rhetorical one'. I do not support the metaphorical definition and notion of Stienstra, as sometimes a metaphor is what it is, rhetorical in its meaning and understanding. I find Bourguet's method of studying metaphors as summarised in Foreman (2011:28), will be most helpful in the biblical context of Isaiah 7 and 8. Bourguet divides the study of a metaphor into five steps:

- Identifying the metaphor
- Determining the limits of the metaphor
- Establishing the topic, for example Yahweh, Judah, enemies
- Studying the vehicle, for example wind, plunder, names, spoils as images
- Studying the tenor means what is meant e.g. with the names, Yahweh and enemies

What the study of the different theories and viewpoint of the scholars showed was that all of them agreed that metaphors have a conceptual function. What this implies for biblical studies is that metaphors can make significant

connections about the tenor and the subject. This viewpoint demonstrates that metaphors not only have a stylistic function, but that it indeed has a more content-orientated approach where the content value is important. Another shared interest among scholars was the relations between metaphors within the biblical text. This relationship between metaphors takes several forms, such as similar metaphors that occur in different circumstances in the text, as well as conflicting metaphors to underline the differences and the conflict that may occur because of the difference. Similar metaphors may have different means within their similarities, as is the case in Isaiah 7 and 8 pertaining the name giving of Isaiah's sons. The similarities are the signs of the name giving but the difference is in the metaphorical meaning of each name in Isaiah 7 and 8.

Thus far in this chapter the general understanding of a metaphor was studied and defined, and the biblical metaphor and the possible interpretive aspects were investigated and discussed. This was done through a thorough literature study of relevant academically literature and scholarly materials. This study would, however, not be complete if the notion of a trauma-specific metaphor is not investigated and perused.

7.2.3 Trauma-specific metaphor

Because a metaphor is a form of expression, it can be extremely personal and because it is a figure of speech and most often a play on words, it can become a vehicle for individuals and collective groups to either experience despair or growth from the metaphorical experience. The question that could rightfully be asked is what constitute as trauma metaphors and how can it be identified, moreover in the biblical text, but especially in the name giving of Isaiah's children in Isaiah 7 and 8.

It is, however, important to note that there is hardly any academic literature available on the subject matter of trauma metaphors, but the research done by Wilson and Lindy (2013) in their book *Trauma, culture, and metaphor: pathways of transformation and integration*, proved to be valuable material to define this concept based on a psychological theory to make it applicable within a biblical context. Many scholars do not refer to a specific trauma metaphor, but uses a metaphor as a therapy form to address trauma. This however, is not the aim for this study. The search is for the understanding of a trauma-specific metaphor in general terms as well as in the biblical text contexts.

7.2.3.1 Trauma archetype

A trauma archetype is the universal forms of trauma experienced by individuals and groups or communities. According to Wilson and Lindy (2013:5), the definitions of trauma archetypes and archetypical traumatic experiences are critical in the formulation of trauma-specific metaphors. Wilson and Lindy (2013:5) stipulate certain dimensions as universal forms of trauma and it can be summarised as follows:

- The trauma archetype is a prototypical stress response pattern present in all human cultures and its effect manifests in explicit behavioural patterns and internal processes. In the content of Isaiah 7 and 8 the constant exposure to possible danger such as war, is ever present as a prototypical stress response that manifested in fear, anxiety and despair in Isaiah 7:2; 4 and Isaiah 8:7; 22 and 22.
- The trauma archetype evokes altered psychological states, which include changes in memory, orientation in time and space. This can be read in Isaiah 7:12; 20; 21-25 and Isaiah 8: 19-20.
- The trauma archetype contains the experience of threat to the psychological and physical wellbeing. This is most prevalent in Isaiah 7 and 8 as impending war, death and becoming a vassal of Assyria is

looming in the distant for the people of Judah. Isaiah 7:4; 5 and 8 attest to this and also Isaiah 8:6; 8 and 21.

- The trauma archetype involves confrontation with the fear of death. Choices and consequences of choices place the content of Isaiah 7 and 8 in the middle of these fear parameters. This is most prevalent in Isaiah 7: 10-13 and Isaiah 8: 19-20.
- The trauma archetype evokes the specter of self-de-integration, dissolution and soul death (loss of identity). Again, prevalent not only for the people of Judah but especially for King Ahaz in his behaviour and political choices that he makes in Isaiah 7 and 8.
- The trauma archetype is a manifestation of overwhelming stressful experiences to the organisation of self and belief system. Something the prophet Isaiah, King Ahaz and the nation of Judah in Isaiah 7 and 8 can attest to. This is profound for Isaiah in Isaiah 8: 17-18.
- The trauma archetype stimulates cognitive attributions of meaning and casualty for injury, suffering, loss and death (altered beliefs). An example is King Ahaz's refusal for a sign from Yahweh and the belief (altered) that the Assyrians could protect and save him from the Syro-Ephraimite invasion, which led to the suffering of the people of Judah, the king himself and the prophet Isaiah.
- The trauma archetype energises posttraumatic growth, recovery and healing. A significant attribute in the metaphorical names of Isaiah's children seen through a trauma lens. Isaiah 7:3ff, Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 8:1-4.
- The trauma archetype activates polarities of meaning attribution within the context of Isaiah 7 and 8, pro-social resilience versus abject despair and the hopelessness paradigm. Isaiah 7: 18-25 and Isaiah 8: 9-10.
- The trauma archetype may evoke spiritual transformation, individual journey, encounter with darkness and the return, transformation and re-emergence of healing. The oracles in both Isaiah 7 and 8, invite King Ahaz and the people of Judah to turn to Yahweh, to establish a faith-based relationship with Him and to have hope in his salvation.

However, they experience the darkness and not the 'dawn' as discussed in a previous chapter. And the hope component as a drive towards a return to Yahweh lies within the names of Isaiah's sons even though they contain judgment and despair elements.

The trauma archetypes discussed, even though it is a modern-day concept, is applicable to the biblical text to aid in the understanding of the text and the traumatic historical context of the time.

7.2.3.2 Trauma-specific metaphors

Now that the implication of trauma archetypes was investigated and determined, the conceptualisation of trauma-specific metaphors can be examined. Wilson and Lindy (2013:6) define trauma metaphors as follows:

The trauma metaphor is a spontaneous verbal picture of the traumatic event and serves as a psychic organizer to rearrange the nature and meaning of the experience. It encodes in memory at unconscious levels. It reflects unmetabolised aspects of the traumatic event and its impact upon pre-existing structures of personality. It represents the self in existential moments of phenomenal trauma.

Within the definition of a trauma metaphor, Wilson and Lindy (2013:6) explain that there are also subtypes within the definition and it can be interpreted as the structure of the trauma metaphor. According to Wilson and Lindy (2013:6), the subtypes are as follows:

- a. The trauma experience itself represents conscious and unconscious elements in the experience and its consequences. Initially it reflects unmetabolised aspects of the traumatic event and its impact on pre-existing structures, and parts of daily functions and ego processes. As

a transforming metaphor, it serves as a psychic organizer to rearrange nature and the meaning of the experience. Regarding the metaphorical implication of the names of Isaiah's sons read through a trauma lens, it can be assumed that King Ahaz, the people of Judah and the prophet Isaiah were accustomed to the presence of Yahweh in their lives, the truth of His word and the implications of disobedience and lack of faith as conscious and unconscious aspects, and as pre-existing structures of identity as an individual but also as a collective group. The impact of signs, the ancient meanings of names and the hope founded in faith, surely was encoded in memory to attribute to the meaning of the experience.

- b. The trauma metaphor is an organizer of spontaneous verbal pictures of the traumatic event and serves to rearrange the nature and meaning of the experience. It is an ongoing intrapsychic process of complexity, which transforms over time as confrontation with the unprocessed memories occurrence and present cluster state of trauma. The oracles in Isaiah 7 and 8 pertaining the names of the children as signs, create the verbal picture to King Ahaz and the people of Judah. I believe the symbolic meaning of the names confronts the king and his subordinates with Yahweh's judgment and restitution. The unwillingness to adhere to the advice of Isaiah and the meaning contained in the names, leads to the confrontation of these unprocessed memories, not only by Isaiah but also through Yahweh himself.
- c. Trauma metaphors are verbal in that it contains cognitive expressions and if it is not adhered to, signify trauma. In the case of the metaphorical names of Isaiah's sons in Isaiah 7 and 8, the symbolism and signs of the names are either verbally spoken or explained in the oracle. Even Yahweh speaks directly to the prophet and to the 'they', 'them' and 'their' referred to in the prophecy.
- d. Trauma metaphors contain unspoken truths of life, the self and the personal journey endured. I believe the unspoken truths and significance of the metaphorical name giving of Isaiah's sons in Isaiah 7 and 8, contained the prophetic message from Yahweh. The

unspoken truth is spoken through Isaiah as prophecies of judgment and salvation, making the truth known to King Ahaz and the Judean nation. The choice of these truths lays in the choice made by King Ahaz and the people of Judah tilting the equilibrium from despair to hope.

- e. Trauma metaphors are reflections of archetypical journeys, universal in nature, progression and meaning. The people of Judah's faith or lack thereof, their participation in necromancy and their disobedience in their journey, becomes a universal or collective way of disbelieve in Yahweh's salvation, enhancing the traumatic experience.
- f. The trauma metaphors evolve and change the structural and functional dimensions across stages of life course development and the process of life enhancement. This aspect within the biblical scope of Isaiah 7 and 8 with reference to the names of Isaiah's sons contains the trace elements of hope, resilience and posttraumatic growth, and of Yahweh's salvation.
- g. Trauma metaphors appear in visual symbolism, allegory and signs in multidimensional ways. Yahweh in Isaiah 7, offered King Ahaz a sign in the form of a visual testimony of his protection of the nation of Judah, in the form of the psychical appearance of the son *Shear-jashub*. On the same notion, the sign of *Immanuel* become a visibility when the virgin gave birth to a son as sign that Yahweh is with the people of Judah. The writing on the tablet, *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, can also be seen as a visual trauma metaphor as part of the prophets' oracle to the king and the people of Judah. Not only were these signs directed to King Ahaz as an individual, but also to the collective group of the people of Judah.
- h. Trauma metaphors reflect culturally shaped beliefs, values, ideologies, and ways of living. There is no proper understanding of trauma metaphors without a cultural embedding framework. The historical background of Judah forms the cultural framework to understand the metaphorical implications of the names of Isaiah's sons. The people of Judah had a prophet Isaiah who had a vision and a calling. They had the Davidic promise of the dynasty, they had the royal courts and they

had the temple, all symbolising Yahweh's relationship with them. However, they also had disbelief, stubbornness, coalition with the enemy Assyria and conflict between King Ahaz, Isaiah and Yahweh.

Trauma metaphors and the structural subtypes of trauma metaphors provide a method of better understanding of the metaphorical name implications in Isaiah 7 and 8 and provides a lens to understand and interpret trauma within the trauma – specific metaphor.

7.3 The metaphorical conduct of Isaiah's naming of his children

What is in a name? Names have meanings. There can be a historical meaning in a name, there can be a linguistic meaning in a name, names can have literary meanings or names can have a metaphorical meaning. Before the metaphorical meaning of Isaiah's sons in chapter 7 and 8 can be focused on, the significance of a name in the biblical times must be addressed.

7.3.1 Names in general in biblical times

The roles that children play, the function of their names and their existence in the Old Testament as well as the Hebrew Bible have received very little attention within the biblical scholarship. There is not a vast amount of literature available on this subject, but what little attention they did receive generally played along with the text where children were viewed as objects of divine promises or components of a covenant. McEntire (2015:38) rightfully states that the only appearances of specific children in prophetic literature are the symbolic named children of Isaiah and Hosea for a purpose to convey a message from Yahweh.

The Hebrew understanding of a person's name, was according to Jackson (2003:6), undeniably linked to the concept of character and therefore your name was your reputation. During Old Testament times, Jackson (2003:6) writes that to honour and revere a name was to show respect to a person and all that person represents. Even more so with children who were named with the hope that they would aspire to the significance of their name and what it meant.

Family constituted the basic social unit in biblical times. Children were valued in Israelite families and King and Stager (2001:41) write that they were considered to be a gift from Yahweh and a blessing to society. Ponessa, Doren and Manhardt (2014:267) write that a name in biblical times could also represent a sign of true faith in Yahweh. The prevalence of the interconnection of metaphorical references to children, write Clifton-Soderstrom and Bjorlin (2014:19), links the category of children to actual children and most importantly, their prominence in Yahweh's work and salvation, and these significant names as themes describe the relationship between Israel and Yahweh.

It is worth remarking that in literature, references to children reveal many ancient Israel conventional ideas about babies, children and adult offspring. The importance of children in families, according to Darr (1994:47), indicates the importance of the bond between Yahweh and Israel through family ties. Therefore, Berrigan (1996:27) states that a birth announcement was met with joy as a child's value was far beyond the economic status of a family.

The importance of names is underlined by Kaizer (1978:45) when he writes:

In het O.T. lezen we vaak, dat het kind direct na de geboorte en wanneer het een jongen was nog vóór de besnijdenis een naam kreeg.

Hierbij werd een enkele maal, zoals nu nog in het Midden-Oosten gewoonte is, vernoemd.

Kaizer (1978:46) also writes that in the case of Isaiah sons 'de naam kon berusten op symboliek.' The Hebrew Bible testifies to Israel's belief that offspring are life's greatest blessing and Perdue (1997:171) writes that the announcement of a pregnancy was a time of great rejoicing, and after the birth there was celebrations with family members. According to Albertz (1994:152-157), there are seven categories that describe dynamic name-giving situations. In short, the list consists of: a status-name, the occasion-name, the event-name, the circumstance-name, the transformation or alteration-name, the predictive-name and the theophoric-name. For me Isaiah's sons, *Shear-jashub* and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, are pre-eminent in the predictive name giving and *Immanuel* is a theophoric name that embeds the name of Yahweh, invoking and displaying protection of Yahweh.

7.3.2 The metaphorical names of Isaiah's sons explained

Isaiah 7 and 8 can be treated as the names given to the children. Isaiah 7 and 8 mention three children with symbolic names: *Shear-jashub*, meaning 'a remnant shall return' (Isaiah 7:3ff: 'And the Lord said to Isaiah: "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son"'), *Immanuel*, 'God with us' (Isaiah 7:14: 'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel') and *Maher-shalal-hash-bas* meaning 'the spoil speeds, the prey hastens' (Isaiah 8:1 'The Lord said to me, "Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters, "Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz."')

The importance of the names of Isaiah's children to support and convey the prophecy of Isaiah is written in Isaiah 8:18, where Isaiah informs his audience that he himself and his children are signs: 'Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts,

who dwells on Mount Zion.’ The fact that Isaiah referred to himself in this verse conveys Yahweh’s involvement with Judah because Isaiah’s name means ‘Yahweh will save.’ To this regard, Schutzius (2015:137) postulates that the names functioned symbolically as signs to anyone who heard the prophet’s message, because it authenticated that the words were from Yahweh to the people of Judah. These names with the metaphorical attachment to them, I believe were a wonder in itself, as they symbolised not only coming events, but they did so in an abnormal and marvellous way.

In the historical context proposed by Isaiah 7 and 8, these children’s names are the metaphorical and symbolic foundation for a message of despair and hope. Hibbard (2012:138) writes that hope will only be the case for Judah and the Davidic dynasty if they are obedient to Yahweh, and if so, they will survive the political turmoil of the late 730s and 720s BCE. This point *in lieu* is specifically made in Isaiah 8:18. The significance of the names made Isaiah willing to embody Yahweh’s message in his son’s names whom, in their own time, became a new metaphor for when ‘the word become flesh’ as a physical symbol to King Ahaz and the people of Judah. Motyer (1993:81) writes that Isaiah named his sons consciously, so that they could in a way symbolise certain aspects of the word of Yahweh to the people.

7.3.2.1 The meaning of *Shear-jashub*

Shear-jashub is grammatically a short sentence and Irvine (1990:142) explains that it consists of a subject *Shear* and a predicate *jashub*. The former part of the name *Shear* derives from the Hebrew root, meaning ‘remain’ or ‘left over’ and generally this means ‘remnant’. It is of interest to note that Thomson (1982:230) states that the root is used 223 times in the Old Testament and speaks of a variety of threats. The latter part of the name, *jashub*, may have a religious sense, according to Grinstead (2008:20), that might imply a turning back to Yahweh, but the verb can also refer to ‘a return from battle’ and the ‘survival in war’. Hibbard (2012:139) draws a very noteworthy conclusion to which I can definitely allude to when he states that the name *Shear-jashub* initially appears in Isaiah 7, but the name is again invoked in Isaiah 10:21 and

10:22 in what is part of an 'on that day' addition, which is an actual fact commentating on the status of the remnant.

The practice of naming a child as a prophetic symbol forms part of the character of Isaiah 7 and Watts (1985:91), as well as McEntire (2015:37), believe the son was already old enough to accompany his father to meet with King Ahaz and to be a silent witness through his name-bearing, to Isaiah's prophecy of the time. The silent prophecy through the metaphorical name becomes intently present in the symbolic actions. Motyer (1993:81) supposes that the name could, however, also imply disaster and the name embodied sight as well as sound.

Irvine (1990:144) gives a further two different explanations by citing that firstly, the emphasis might suggest the smallest of remnant as 'only a remnant' or 'a remnant' and secondly, as an alternative it might intend an assertive meaning as 'a remnant indeed' or less strongly 'at least a remnant'. To summarise Irvine's (1990:144) remarks, it implies that the first and the second meaning can be seen as hopeful declarations, focusing on the repentance of a remnant and on its political-military survival. The third and the fourth translation are both pessimistic and negative implication, but it differs from each other based on their concern, either with a religious turning back to Yahweh or as 'political survival'. I would choose a combination of the translations embodying both despair and hope.

7.3.2.2 The meaning of *Immanuel*

The *Immanuel* sign in Isaiah 7:14 is an extremely significant passage to study in connection with its metaphorical implication as part of Isaiah's prophecy and as a possible trauma marker for hope. The name *Immanuel* means 'With us is God' or 'God with us'. The name does not appear anywhere else in the Old Testament, but Childs (2001:66) writes that it has a close parallel with Psalm 46:8, 12 which makes it clear that it is a close expression of trust in Yahweh and the essential devotion he has towards Israel. Smith (2007:202)

writes that the *Immanuel* sign contains the positive side of Yahweh's message because it predicts the defeat of Judah's enemies.

According to Motyer (1993:84), the sign is no longer a matter of invitation or a sign of hope. It becomes a judgment prediction confirming Yahweh's displeasure with King Ahaz and the people of Judah. I do not agree with Motyer but rather with Hibbard (2012:138) who makes the observation that *Immanuel* as a sign-name is reused in Isaiah 8:8 and 8:10, both referring to 'God with us'. The verse in Isaiah 8:8, 'and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel', contains a threatening connection for the Assyrian invasion. For Judah it is a sign of hope, but for the Assyrians it means defeat. Chapter 8:10 reads: 'Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.' The essence of this verse is to inform the enemy nations that their plans against Jerusalem will come to naught because 'God is with us'.

7.3.2.3 The meaning of *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*

In Isaiah 8:1-3 reference is made to *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* and the Hebrew meaning of the name is 'speedy plunder, swift pillage' or 'the spoil speeds, the prey hastens'. This was a name Isaiah was commanded first to write in large characters on a tablet, and afterwards to give as a metaphorical name to a son that was born denoting the sudden attack by the Assyrian army. Tull (2010:179) writes that the name consists of multiwords and even though names in the Bible forms whole thoughts are not rare, what is, however, uncommon, is a personal name consisting of multiple words. Other metaphorical names can be found in Isaiah 9:6 and Hosea 1:6; 9 and these consist of only two Hebrew words. On this aspect, Sawyer (1984:89) writes that the four component parts of the name are even though it is long, clear enough because two are verbs meaning 'to hurry' (*maher*, *hash*) and two are nouns meaning 'spoil' (*shalal*, *baz*). What Sawyer (1984:89) finds puzzling is that if this was a real name, he would then expect some religious or militaristic meaning like a war cry. Otherwise it should actually be understood

as a general impression, heightened by the words in the name referring to bloodthirsty, loot hungry soldiers rushing in to kill and if this is so, one needs to go no further than the invasion of the Assyrian army. This name and its metaphorical meaning, has relevance in the historical context of the time.

A very interesting analysis, made by Motyer (1993:90), is that the name *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* is an impressionistic name rather than a grammatical one, because it is intended to provoke questions and not to answer them.

7.4 Reading the metaphorical names of Isaiah's children through a lens of trauma: an application

Making sense of trauma is a universal human need for meaning and a widely-accepted notion, and reading the metaphorical implications of Isaiah's children through a trauma lens is an act of meaning making in itself to understand the text. For me trauma is not a one-sided phenomenon but multifaceted, encompassing both despair and hope. Trauma can have both negative and positive implications and these go hand in hand, but most importantly within the complexity of trauma, growth and resilience can also be found in trauma.

Isaiah 7 and 8 create a metaphorical trauma platform through the signs and symbols of the metaphorical names of Isaiah's children. The trauma implications of these metaphorical messages can either be experienced as an individual blow or as a collective trauma that impacts the fibre of social life and impairs the prevailing sense of community, as well as the physical and psychological wellbeing of the individual facing traumatic circumstances. In the case of Isaiah 7 and 8, the trauma laced within the metaphorical names of Isaiah's children, might be experienced either by the individual such as King Ahaz and Isaiah, or the collective group, the people of Judah or they can be experienced individually or collectively simultaneously.

When reading through a trauma lens, I must constantly remind myself of the words of Smith-Christopher (2011:270) that as biblical interpreters, we should be wary of adopting cross-discipline theories without scrutiny. As trauma theories often focus on the individual and the mental disorders associated with trauma or the medical treatment within a medical environment that may be needed, I am reminded that this is a Western phenomenon, not always transferable on the Ancient world or even Africa or the Middle east today. I believe that we must be sensitive to trauma tendencies and not only theory when working with the biblical text, and that one should stay conscious of the fact that the biblical text has arisen out of community-orientated cultures.

The question now is, how to apply the observations made about trauma literature and tendencies on Isaiah 7 and 8. To be able to read the metaphorical names through a trauma lens, a metaphor must be identified; trauma must be present as an archetype within the individual or the collective group, a trauma-specific metaphor must be acknowledged and the context of the text must be adhered to. For the rest of this chapter the names of Isaiah's sons in chapters 7 and 8 will be discussed in this manner.

7.4.1 *Shear-jashub* as trauma-specific metaphor

Isaiah 7 is set in the days of King Ahaz. This is the chapter where trauma starts. The chapter carries a message of repentance and of giving a warning of imminent danger and a threat of war. King Ahaz choose not to trust Yahweh, and the chapter also amplifies the consequences of the King and the people of Judah's resistance and unbelief to trust in Yahweh's message.

When the name *Shear-jashub* is studied, it is clear that names with meanings was a well-known custom in biblical time and King Ahaz and the people of Judah would have been accustomed to the practices of names with meanings. Since names had significance, the theory–pattern method suggested by Jindo (2010:222) earlier in the chapter, is applicable to the name *Shear-jashub*, because it is important, especially with reference to the

metaphorical implication as it includes the relationship and understanding between thoughts, language and tradition in the historical time frame of the Syro-Ephraimite threat. When applying Bouguet in Foreman's (2011:28) divisions for a metaphor, the topic of the metaphor is a message from Yahweh through the oracle of Isaiah for King Ahaz to trust Yahweh and have faith, and not to be fearful. The vehicle of this metaphor in the name is the returning or survival aspect of the image. The tenor is that what would remain, the remnant or a remnant, which in a way foreshadows coming events. The name metaphor also holds multiple purposes of speaking, and according to Macky's (1990:77) assessment, evaluative speech relates to judgment of an event or people. The name *Shear-jashub* carries not only an evaluative expression, but also a performative expression, portraying promises as well. Within the metaphorical name there is also torrents of traumatic imagery in the text, where in verse 2 it reads: 'the heart of Ahaz and the heart of the people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.' This imagery explains the start of fear, tension and anxiety, implicating the trauma markers and tendencies within the text. The impending war on Judah from the Northern borders and the Assyrian threat enhances the trauma aspects, not only for King Ahaz but also for the people of Judah and the prophet Isaiah who is anxious for the king to trust Yahweh.

To identify trauma in the name *Shear-jashub*, the trauma archetype, stress response pattern as indicated by Wilson and Lindy (2013:5), will be used to be able to formulate a trauma-specific metaphor. The stress response pattern even though the name *Shear-jashub* proclaims that a remnant will return, evokes psychological states of disbelief and disillusion with King Ahaz. The individual experience of the king involves inner conflict with himself and the revisiting of previous traumatic experiences he might have experienced such as war and devastation.

The symptoms of a re-experienced trauma are the inability to make healthy choices and it is clearly visible in the choices that King Ahaz made in not trusting Yahweh but to place his fate in the hands of the Assyrians. King Ahaz's inability to choose faith has major ramifications for the people of Judah who will later on experience the physical Assyrian threat of a looming war, and relentless exposure to the emotional stressors of fear and anxiety. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DMS-V-TR)* states that individuals exposed to threatening circumstances that might involve mental or physical injury, will experience constant and prolonged symptoms of fear, helplessness and despair. The name *Shear-jashub* has within this paradigm a dualistic implication as trauma marker, because it carries within the name bursts of hope, but also the warren of despair that only 'a remnant' will return, if the king displays faith. The whole impact of the name rests on the axes of faith even though despair lies embedded in the notion that only 'a' remnant will return 'if' King Ahaz turns to Yahweh in faith.

The trauma-specific metaphor in the metaphorical name *Shear-jashub* derives from the conscious and unconscious elements of the experience as described by Wilson and Lindy (2013:6) where its impact is felt on pre-existing structures and daily functions. It has been attested that names with meaning was a well-known pre-existing function in Judean life, as well as prophesy to the royal court. Yahweh's involvement with his people would have been a daily occurrence for the people of Judah. Fear, anxiety, disobedience, despair and lack of faith rearranged this pre-existing metaphorical function to create trauma and a continuous exposure to trauma tendencies.

Another trauma element in my opinion is the fact that the impact of the returning remnant is only experienced at a later stage, culminating the trauma symptoms in a prolonged manner for the king, Isaiah and the people of Judah. On this aspect, Calhoun and Tedeschi (2013:3) write that the more prolonged the exposure and the more negative the circumstances are, the more likely it becomes that individuals and communities will experience distressing

emotions. What this further implies is that for people, who are exposed to life-threatening events, a major emotional response is anxiety and fear, especially about possible future experiences, and this is precisely the message that the name *Shear-jashub* holds, the fear of the unknown.

According to Wilson and Lindy (2013:6), a trauma-specific metaphor creates a spontaneous visual picture and the young child, *Shear-jashub* did just that with his presence when he became a visual symbol of despair and hope. The complexity of all these intrinsic trauma factors makes it possible to read the metaphorical name *Shear-jashub* through a trauma lens. Another trauma metaphor relating to this name is that it contains truths of life and the prophecy spoken to King Ahaz contains the truth of faith. The name signifies that trusting Yahweh and turning back to Him for protection will result in survival and hope.

The notion of posttraumatic growth can be summarised as *more vulnerable, yet stronger* in Isaiah 7:3, but as Motyer (2011:81) rightfully states the name portrays a definite promise for Judah. Yahweh would never desert his people so that they would perish. The name also carries disaster but also, yet again, it holds the prospect of the returning of a remnant, a constant glimmer of hope that the nation of Judah will survive. If this is the case, the name *Shear-jashub* can be treated as posttraumatic growth and Rendon (2016:16) proposes that growth is possible when there is openness to new possibilities, even in the presence of despair. The promise of a remnant contained in the name *Shear-jashub* indicates such a possibility of survival. Rendon (2016:16) also writes that growth gives the opportunity to strengthen relationships and although King Ahaz chose to follow his own suite to trust the Assyrians rather than Yahweh, the symbolism in the name hold the eternal promise of Yahweh's commitment to the people of Judah if they turn to seek and trust Him.

7.4.2 *Immanuel* as trauma-specific metaphor

In Isaiah 7:1, Yahweh speaks directly to King Ahaz, inviting him to ask for a sign to indicate Yahweh's commitment to the people and that he will keep his promises to Judah. Hence, King Ahaz does not want to ask for a sign and Calhoun and Tedeschi (2013:3) write that most people, even if they are highly resilient, experience some degree of distress in challenging situations, and feelings of guilt is not uncommon for people that are challenged and are unable to make logical decisions. King Ahaz, as previously been discussed, in his reluctance, is establishing ongoing tension between Yahweh, himself and the prophet Isaiah, not only through his inability to make decisions but also through his disbelief and victim role that he assumes.

When looking at the sign name of *Immanuel* in Isaiah 7:14-16, using Bourget's divisions of a metaphor (Foreman 2011:28), the topic of the name metaphor implies 'God with us'. The tenor of the metaphor implies that Yahweh is constantly omnipresent and that the 'us' denotes the vehicle of the metaphor, signifying the 'them' and 'they' that are found in Isaiah 7 and 8. The 'them' and 'they' are disobedient to Yahweh and the prophet Isaiah choose not to be identified with them through his prophetic utterance.⁴² If the imagining tool of Macky (1990:77) is taken into consideration, the name *Immanuel* holds creative and re-creative properties as the King and the people of Judah already have some direct knowledge or experiences of the metaphor in question, that 'God is with us' as an omnipresent factor. The name *Immanuel* falls under the method-orientated pattern as described by Jindo (2010:223) and Carasik (2006:85) also suggests three principles, namely the ramifications, the specific imagery and its intertextual function. Firstly, the ramification of 'God with us', according to Kosanke and Manhardt (2011:19), expresses trust in the presence of Yahweh.

⁴² The notion of the 'them' and 'they' was previously discussed in preceding chapters.

King Ahaz decision not to trust in Yahweh, but to rather place his trust in a political situation with a human king which leads to the destruction of his household and Judah. Secondly, the special imagery is used in a precise and concentrated way and Motyer (2011: 84) writes that the sign of the name *Immanuel* is a prediction and no longer a persuasion to have faith, but to rather confirm Yahweh's displeasure. It also confirms all that Yahweh said through Isaiah to King Ahaz – that this was the moment of decision and the consequences were divine retribution on unbelief. The intertextual function of 'God with us' is further exacerbated in Isaiah 8:8 and Isaiah 8:10 with intertextual references also made to Psalm 46 and Matthews 1:23.

Trauma tendencies and archetypes that are prevalent in the metaphorical name *Immanuel* is the confrontation with fear and death, where the possibility of Yahweh's retribution can lead to destruction for the people of Judah. A specter of dissolution and loss of identity must have been in the forefront of the minds of King Ahaz, Isaiah and the people of Judah, as the looming threat of war, devastation and destruction were becoming a stark reality. Prolonged exposure to the stressors must have had an impact on the social fibre of the Judean people. Here we observe a dual phenomenon – on the one hand despair, disaster, and the other hand of redemption and hope, in the Immanuel narrative in verses 14-16.

Poser (2016:42) postulates that trauma can take place in three phases, namely 'trauma response', 'regression' and 'reunification'. Trauma response refers to the element of fragmentation or repeated attempts, regression infers to ward off the trauma and protect oneself and reunification means integration into the narrative. When the verses of Isaiah 8:8 and 8:10 are examined, it is of interest to note that Isaiah 8:8 holds a threat as fragmentation of repeated consequences for the king and the people of Judah's disobedience and disbelief in Yahweh. The way the king and the people tries to ward off the trauma is through placing their trust in the Assyrians, and in so enhancing the traumatic experience for the individual and the collective group. The

reunification is found in verse 10 where the narrative closes that nothing will happen to the people of Judah *if* they trust in Yahweh because 'God is with us'.

Poser (2016:41) writes that trauma can also be dominated by sensory images, especially the literary treatments of trauma where there is reference to eating or food. The conversation of the consumption of food into symbolic action occurs in verses 15-16 where it still refers to the *Immanuel* sign. Abernethy (2014:57) states that the terms 'curds' and 'honey' are nearly always positive in the Old Testament, but in the case of the *Immanuel* sign, it is also traits of food of a nomadic and displaced lifestyle amidst the 'loss of cultivated' land that can be due to disruption.⁴³ This trauma archetype, according to Wilson and Lindy (2013:5), comprises of the threat to not only the psychological wellbeing of the people of Judah, but also their physical wellbeing as this name sign contains the judgment and the prospect of eating a nomadic diet. The overwhelming stressful experience that King Ahaz and the people of Judah are facing constitutes the archetype stressor referred to as displacement and a traumatic blow it imposes onto the cultural system. I believe the stressor tendencies are even more polarised by the fact that their enemies would deplete their food resources, but even more so that Yahweh's sovereign hand would punish their disobedience.

To identify a trauma-specific metaphor for the *Immanuel* sign embodies the aspects that reflect reflects beliefs, values, ideologies and the ways of living as explained by Wilson and Lindy (2013:6). The historical background of the time as depicted in Isaiah 7 is an important contributor to this metaphorical name as it is against this backdrop that Yahweh offers King Ahaz a sign to quell the political turmoil of the Syro-Ephraimite threat. Not only at this time in history is the impending invasion and war imminent, but King Ahaz and the people of Judah have the privilege to hear his commands through the prophet

⁴³ Blenkinsopp (2000:236) also adopts a negative interpretation when he states that 'it is impossible to interpret it otherwise.'

Isaiah. They also had the Davidic promise, the royal courts and the close relationship with Yahweh to protect them. However, the king's disbelief made the promise of 'God with us' a looming threat with disastrous posttraumatic stress responses in the long run.

Another attribute of a trauma-specific metaphor, according to Wilson and Lindy (2013:6), is the reflection of an archetypical journey in progression and meaning, which entails the cultural and faith-based orientation of the individual or the collective group. In this regard, Isaiah 7:14 pertains two dominant progression themes. The first is a cultural orientation of birth and the metaphorical meaning of a name. Piotrowski (2016:47) writes that the *Immanuel* sign serves as a sign to the house of David for them to know that Yahweh will protect it and the name itself provides the ramification for the entire nation. This is not only a cultural orientation for the people of Judah, but also a faith-based notion of hope and survival amidst the tension, anxiety and fear of what might happen to them.

Hence, posttraumatic growth and resilience in the sign name of *Immanuel* can be found for the collective group of the Judean people. The *Immanuel* prophecy is inserted in the historical setting of King Ahaz's kingship and even though it is pertinently seen as a sign of punishment, this metaphorical sign can also be interpreted as a sign of hope for the future where Judah will be able to live in peace. The promise in the name 'God with us' as a prospective future pull and posttraumatic growth opportunity prevails in the communal structural and functional dimensions. Berger (2015:76) describes these dimensions as an enhanced appreciation for life, strengthening of the community and a stronger sense of spirituality, and the belief that over time there can be change. Therefore, the *Immanuel* promise is that the Davidic house will be preserved, serving as a sign of hope and to promote posttraumatic growth through renewed faith in the people of Judah that Yahweh is with *them!*

7.4.3 *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* as trauma-specific metaphor

The historical setting for the metaphorical name *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* falls in the period of the Syro-Ephraimite war. The meaning of the name contains two comparable verbs of 'quick; swift' and 'spoil; plunder'. The interpretation of the name explains who will be plundered and who will be defeated through the plundering. The nations to be plundered will be Samaria and Damascus and they will be defeated by Assyria. Childs (2001:72) clarifies the metaphorical name of *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* as a sign when he explains that a sign always preceded a prophecy of judgment or salvation, and it also serves as a pledge that it will be fulfilled to accentuate its message. A second usage, according to Childs (2001:72), is a form of symbolic action and in this case, it is preceded with a symbolic inscription on a tablet and because there were witnesses to this event, it seems if Yahweh already decided upon judgment beforehand and that will now be executed.

The treatment of the metaphorical implication of the name *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* concerns several trauma symptoms. The name symbolises an attack by Assyria on the Northern kingdom that leaves the Judean nation vulnerable for an invasion by the Assyrians. The prolonged exposure to traumatic events and for the King, the prophet and the people of Judah heightened the whole trauma episode. Lakoff and Johnson (2003:271) state that a key issue concerning a metaphor is that it is conceptual in nature, meaning that it is grounded in everyday experiences.

The continual exposure to trauma such as war, devastation, threat, fears and anxiety can lead to a symptom of desensitisation where feelings of numbness and hopelessness in thinking and emotion response is present. The threat in the name *Maher-shalal-has-baz* with the metaphorical implication of 'speedy plunder, swift pillage' would have a numbed implication because they have been threatened for a prolonged period already. Again, the division process of Bourguet in Foreman (2011:280) is applicable for this metaphor. The vehicle

of the metaphor is the impending plunder, the swift attack, the spoils that would be carried away and the speediness of the traumatic experience. The tenor of the metaphor is subtly hidden in the name because it resembles an action being brought forward by Yahweh, using the Assyrians to do the devastation.

The metaphorical name of *Mahe-shalal-has-baz* construes a metaphor-orientated pattern and is described by Jindo (2010:224) as a conceptual world within a biblical narrative, coinciding with elements of the method-orientated pattern depicting the consequences and the imagery of the metaphor. The conceptual world for the Judean nation is the fear of destruction by Assyria and the consequences is that they will be a vassal state to the Assyrians. The consequential aspect is Yahweh's judgment of the people of Judah as it was contained in the symbolical inscription, but became 'flesh' when the child was born.

The prototypical stress responses according to Wilson and Lindy (2013:5), that are associated with the metaphorical meaning of the name *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz*, is again the threat to the psychological and physical wellbeing and the confrontation with fear and death. To define a trauma-specific metaphor for the metaphorical name meaning 'speedy plunder, swift pillage', visual symbolism, allegory and multidimensional signs are applicable here. Within the metaphorical name there is also torrents of traumatic imagery that takes it form of visual messages to verbal cognitive expressions that lies between speech and speechlessness. Calhoun and Tedeschi (2013:5) postulates that people under severe stress tend to withdraw and that is a notable symptom on the part of the prophet Isaiah in verse 17 where he retreats and quietly waits on Yahweh. The trauma-specific metaphor also reflects the universal journey and progression associated with the implied metaphor, as defined by Wilson and Lindy (2013:6). In Isaiah 8, Yahweh's judgment and his displeasure with King Ahaz and the people of Judah is tangible. The prolonged fear and the waiting effect results in the people of Judah

participation in necromancy and their disobedience culminates in Isaiah's frustration to such an extent that he retreats from everyday life. The lack of faith thrust the Judean nation into despair with no hope of a new dawn.

With all this doom and gloom, the question can rightfully be asked if posttraumatic growth is in any way possible when the metaphorical meaning of name *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* is taken into consideration. The name itself might not hold any promise of salvation, but the name gives hope that in a few years Israel and Syria would no longer be a threat to Judah. The posttraumatic growth that flows from here is Isaiah's unconditional faith in Yahweh and Tedeschi et al. (2009:18) postulate that individual growth includes feelings of faith becoming stronger and also improved relationships. All of these posttraumatic growth domains will form part of Isaiah's prophetic utterances because of the promise that 'God is with us'.

7.5 Summary

This chapter did not seek to provide a comprehensive study of the metaphor theory. It did, however, sought to understand the metaphorical meaning of Isaiah's son's names as trauma tendencies through a lens of trauma. A comprehensive social science and biblical literature study was conducted to understand and entertain the concept of metaphors, the theories and definitions, biblical metaphors and trauma-specific metaphors. This literature knowledge formed the basis to build on further to address the trauma element encompassed in the names of Isaiah's children as a metaphorical message given by Yahweh through the prophetic utterances of the prophet Isaiah.

In my reading of Isaiah 7 and 8, I found a text with multiple layers and ambiguity within the names given to Isaiah's children. The names gave expression of the fate of King Ahaz and Judah and portrayed the experiences

of the individual. These individual experiences culminated into collective trauma of the group.

In this chapter I have addressed the themes of Isaiah 7:3ff, referring to the name *Shear-jashub*, Isaiah 7:14, the *Immanuel* sign and Isaiah 8:1, the *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* oracle.

The metaphorical implication of these names was measured against the meaning and the definition of a metaphor. I have gleaned the following five insights: Firstly, a metaphor by definition has varied interpretations, but the most workable one for me was that a metaphor in general is 'a shift, a carrying over of a word from its normal use to a new use. Secondly, the valuable work of Lakoff and Johnson (2003) provided key elements such as the conceptual nature of a metaphor, that it is grounded in everyday experiences and it can be ubiquitous. Thirdly, that theory patterns are essential in the understanding of biblical metaphors and the divisional steps of Bourguet helped in the identification of the metaphor in relation to the topic, vehicle and tenor of especially the metaphorical names of Isaiah's sons. Fourthly, a trauma-specific metaphor is based on trauma archetype prototypical stress response patterns to form a spontaneous verbal picture of the traumatic event. Lastly, the metaphorical conduct of the names of Isaiah's sons had traumatic tendencies and could be read through a lens of trauma in the biblical narrative.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this final chapter is to compose a summary of the main findings that have emerged from the study of the tension between despair and hope in Isaiah 7 and 8 from a perspective of trauma and posttraumatic growth. This chapter will highlight all the factors contributing to the study field to be able to show the main conclusions of the research. A summary of the problem statement and how it was addressed will also be given. In addition, this chapter will also include a critical reflection of the study, its limitations and possible research opportunities for future studies.

Composing conclusions on the main findings on the study of biblical trauma in Isaiah 7 and 8 is in many ways similar to looking at a painting of *The Scream*, painted by Edward Munch in 1893. *The Scream* is known for its expressionistic contrasting colours, a bright swirling sky in contrast with the dark threatening clouds in the background. One cannot help but to stare at the mysterious person, clasping his face, screaming in anguish alone on a dock. The painting symbolises inner thoughts, feelings and emotions with which all of us can identify. The study of the tension between hope and despair as trauma markers are in many ways similar to the painting. First, the picture must be viewed from a distance to gain a better understanding of how all the dabs of colours together connects the meaning of the picture to a whole. For this concluding chapter, the overall concept of trauma had to be researched to understand the aspects of trauma within the text of Isaiah 7 and 8. The finer detail of the painting highlights the message of the painting for the person viewing it. To write a conclusion, all the aspects that were found to be important, need to be highlighted and mentioned. Just as the picture depicts contrasting colours, the study was also able to find the contrast and possibilities in trauma and posttraumatic growth. If one wants to appreciate a

painting, you have to step back and allow the painting to 'speak' to you. It is also the case when writing a conclusion, one has to step back, allow reflection on the research done and write about the journey of the study. *The Scream* is in a way a metaphor to show that trauma has been part of life, since the beginning of time.

8.2 The main findings in the research process

The problem statement as proposed in chapter 1, formed the central theme of the study. When the text of Isaiah 7 and 8 are read, there seems to be tension between notions of hope and despair. Isaiah 7 and 8 in itself is a difficult read, because of the historical and social content of the Syro-Ephraimite war and the looming threat from Assyria, that created tension between King Ahaz, Isaiah and the people of Judah. To gain a better understanding of the Book of Isaiah, a thorough literature and commentary study was done with a particular focus on Isaiah 1-12, the so-called Isaiah-*Denkschrift* and an in-depth study of chapters 7 and 8. An intensive research study was also undertaken to understand trauma, traumatic experiences and posttraumatic growth. A variety of literature across a wide range of study fields, such as psychology, sociology and philosophy, were studied. After this intensive literature and commentary study, the research statement was then formulated as follows:

There seems to be tension between notions of despair and hope in the text of Isaiah 7 and 8. Within this context of tension the supposition subsists that traumatic elements can be detected that relate to the issue of despair and hope in these two chapters.

The formulation of the problem statement formed the research foundation, and inevitably created the platform for further questions to be formulated to address the problem statement:

Can chapters 7 and 8 be read through a trauma lens, and if so, what is the meaning of trauma within a theological discourse?

Another important question was:

How does the metaphorical name giving of Isaiah's sons play in on the despair - hope tension and aspects of trauma?

It was noted in chapter 1 that Isaiah 7 and 8 not only has a traumatic historical climate, but within the layers of the text, notions of tension, metaphorical name giving and possible posttraumatic growth could be found. The study therefore set out to respond to the problem statement and ensuing questions by engaging the text in Isaiah 7 and 8 with a biblical traumatic lens and posttraumatic growth understanding.

8.3 A new approach to address the problem statement

To address the problem statement anew, a literature methodological approach formed the basis of this comprehensive study. All the requirements for a literature study were adhere to in this study, namely: a) The literature that was studied, had purpose to the aims and goals of the research topic; b) The authors that were studied, has authority in their respective academic fields; c) The literature research material added value to the study undertaken; d) The literature methodology was academic reliable for this conclusion to be achieved.

The study unfolded in the following manner:

1. The study set out to understand the tension and trauma within a theological discourse. Trauma was studied in a broader sense of the word in chapter 2. The history of trauma studies was undertaken to aid in a better understanding of trauma as a socio-science phenomenon. The history study of trauma revealed that trauma has existed for ages, but the study of trauma is only a more recent concept of interest during the previous century. Through a comprehensive literature study, it was determined that trauma had several emotional, physical and

posttraumatic symptoms. The research also indicated that trauma can carry the prospects of posttraumatic growth and resilience.

2. To narrow the scope of research and to address the problem statement, chapter 3 undertook a research strategy to investigate the possibility of biblical trauma. This information supplied the background for the notion of trauma in prophecy.
3. The study in chapter 4 explored the tension within the historical traumatic climate of Isaiah 7 and 8. The treatment of the text of Isaiah 7 and 8 revealed that Judah was under threat. These two chapters form the core of the Syro-Ephraimite war and the impending threat posed by the Assyrians. The study of the biblical text and relevant commentaries disclosed that the text of 2 Kings 16 and 2 Chronicles 28 presented a similar account with the text in Isaiah 7 and 8. Chapter 2 gave a detailed account on this regard. The commentary and literature study also revealed that the text of Isaiah 7 and 8 are ensconced within the so-called Isaiah *Denkschrift* and the study showed that the traumatic historical background of the *Denkschrift* made for a better understanding of the tension that was found in chapters 7 and 8.
4. An expositional and literature study of Isaiah 7 and 8 was done in chapter 5. In the previous chapters, it was determined that trauma was prevalent in the pre-exilic period in Isaiah 7 and 8. Various commentaries and literary works comprised the expositional framework of this chapter. Within the expositional perspective of chapters 7 and 8, the literary context, the structure and delineation were done.
5. The expositional study of Isaiah 7 and 8 contributed to the notion of the traumatic triangle of tension between Ahaz, Isaiah and Yahweh. In this chapter, the psychological and theological characteristics of trauma and the way that it influenced the traumatic triangle between Ahaz, Isaiah and Yahweh was established and discussed.

6. The main theme in Isaiah 7 and 8 is the metaphorical names of Isaiah's children as signs to King Ahaz and the people of Judah. The metaphorical implications of *Shear-jashub*, *Immanuel* and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, as trauma markers, revealed the significance of metaphors, the trauma elements contained in the names and the notion of despair and hope which is pertinent in Isaiah 7 and 8.

8.4 Main conclusions

Isaiah 7 and 8 posed a challenge. A challenge that at times left me disheartened but most of the time excited and enthusiastic. The emotions I felt whilst conducting this study, gave me a first-hand roller-coaster emotional experience of what trauma might be. And in a way, I could understand and empathised with the audience in Isaiah 7 and 8, whom also experienced the constant sway between despair and hope in their historical and social setting. Therefore, I believe the problem statement and the subsequent ensuing questions, as stated in chapter 1, were answered through this study. What the study revealed was that there are notions of despair and hope in the text of Isaiah 7 and 8.

The following conclusions came to the fore:

- Trauma shatters life, it can collapse identity through fear, anxiety, despair and disbelief. It can change the social fibre of a collective community through dissidence, prolonged exposure to threats and in the case of Isaiah 7 and 8, the bad decisions made by King Ahaz. The people of Judah became a passive voice, because trauma inflicts not only physical wounds but also emotional ones. This study also found that the notion of trauma as a modern-day tendency could be applicable for reading Isaiah 7 and 8 through a trauma lens. And the reason being is that the text contains notions of tension and trauma in Isaiah's oracle, the metaphorical implications of the names of Isaiah's sons and the response of King Ahaz on these oracles.

- This study also ascertained that the most of the research done on biblical and prophetic trauma is on the exilic and post-exilic periods. Very little is written about the pre-exilic period. The conclusion this study came to, is that trauma is most definitely visible in the pre-exilic text of Isaiah 7 and 8, and the writer hereof coined the phrase 'the waiting effect' as a description of the continuous exposure to stressors such as fear, looming war, anxiety and despair.
- The historical and traumatic climate in Isaiah 7 and 8 as tension concepts are well attested in the biblical text, literature and commentaries. Trauma studies, however, contributed important insights for understanding of these concepts. Two big contributors to the historical tension were the Syro-Ephraimite War (734-732 BCE) and the threatening invasion of the Assyrians (704-701). It is during the Syro-Ephraimite war that the relationship between Isaiah and King Ahaz occurred. Isaiah 7 and 8 reflect a period in the Judean history where there was a constant threat of war, anxiety and fear, and despair became part of everyday life. King Ahaz's behaviour and responses to the oracles spoken by Isaiah and given by Yahweh, denotes the notion of despair and hope.
- Another interesting discovery made in this study is that even though in Isaiah 7 and 8 there is tension and despair in Isaiah 7 and 8, individuals and collective groups can rise above the traumatic experience and have a positive change that instills hope and posttraumatic growth.
- The prophecy of Isaiah as judgment and salvation oracles also represents the notions of hope and despair as possible tension and trauma tendencies.
- The literature and expositional study of Isaiah 7 and 8 disclosed within the text the notion of tension and trauma for King Ahaz, the prophet and the people of Judah. The expositional study done on the units

within chapters 7 and 8 was of value not only for the understanding of the historical and social settings of the text, but also for the disclosure of the tension in the verses of the text. A further conclusion this study came to is that over the years and still today, scholars are in disagreement over the treatment of the Book of Isaiah. The delineation of the chapters has been a point of interest over the years. Therefore, when working with the Book of Isaiah, research can never be completed. The subsequent question asked as part of the problem statement can therefore be rightfully answered, that Isaiah 7 and 8 can be read through a biblical lens, and the implication of such an endeavour could aid a theological discourse in the sense of a better understanding of biblical trauma in the prophetic text.

- The study also investigated the complex and traumatic relationship between King Ahaz, Isaiah and Yahweh. Isaiah was a complex character in even more complex circumstances in the history of Judah during the Syro-Ephraimite war and the threatening Assyrian invasion. King Ahaz was not held in high esteem and he was seen as faithless and disobedient. The prophet and the king were on different sides of the continuum as Isaiah placed all his trust in Yahweh, and King Ahaz relied on the human king of Assyria. The relationship triangle created tension and a traumatic environment, not much different as we see in the world today. This explosive relationship environment between King Ahaz, Isaiah and Yahweh, came to a head when King Ahaz refused a sign from Yahweh.
- A significant conclusion this study came to, was that within a stressful political environment, pre-trauma variables, peri-traumatic stressors and acquaintanceship status played an important role in the traumatic tension between King Ahaz, Isaiah and Yahweh.

- One of the most important conclusions this study came to, is that the metaphorical names of Isaiah's sons, *Shear-jashub*, *Immanuel* and *Maher-shalal-has-baz* can be read through a trauma lens. This was done by understanding and implementing the theory of a metaphor, defining what a biblical metaphor is and creating a trauma-specific metaphor for each name of Isaiah's sons.

In the light of the research done in this thesis, it should be clear that sufficient evidence were provided and arguments presented to proof the problem statement as correct and viable. Furthermore, the aims and objectives set out in chapter 1 were reached and properly substantiated.

No study or research project of this nature can ever be completed or be comprehensive enough and this study is no exception. Further research in the following areas might prove worthwhile:

- Biblical reports of the Syro-Ephraimite war and the Assyrian crisis in Isaiah 7 and 8, and intertext such as 2 Kings 16 and 2 Chronicles 28 received some attention in this study but not at length. This study chose to address the cross-references as summation points within the chapter, but it might prove profitable to research these references and their relationship in more detail in future.
- This study paid much attention to the so-called Isaiah-*Denkschrift*, with Isaiah 7 and 8 as the main focus. It seems that the last word on the existence of a *Denkschrift* has not been spoken as the differing views on the matter reflect. There is room for more research and clarity on this issue.
- The study may also show shortcomings with regards to the study of prophecy. The prophecy phenomenon was discussed but not at length, since the focus of research was on the prophetic role of Isaiah within the trauma tension triangle between King Ahaz, Isaiah and Yahweh. It is clear from the many recent publications on the

phenomenon of prophecy, that there is still need for more research on the topic.

8.5 Suggested themes for further research

This study has contributed to a new exciting field of biblical study, reading text through a trauma lens. Possible themes for further research could be the following:

- The reading of pre-exilic texts through a trauma biblical lens.
- The biblical metaphor in pre-exilic texts as tension markers.
- Posttraumatic growth as an outcome in prophetic texts.
- Decolonising biblical trauma in prophetic texts for the readers in a postcolonial setting.

These themes will contribute to the study of biblical trauma and to a better understanding of the prophetic texts in the Bible. There is a need for a paradigm shift in our reading and understanding of especially pre-exilic texts to address the need for prophecy today. And in this regard, to close with the words of Van Maanen (1988:120): 'we know our analysis is not finished, for now, it is merely over.'

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